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LONDON: CHATTO AND WINDUS PICCADILLY,

CAMIOLA

A GIRL WITH A FORTUNE

BY

JUSTIN MCCARTHY, M.P.

AUTHOR OF "DEAR LADY DISDAIN," "MISS MISANTHROPE,"
"A HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES," ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

London

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1885

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CAMIOLA.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. AND MRS. WALTER FITZURSE.

THE whole tone of the rectory had curiously changed since the marriage of Walter and Janette, and the return of the runaways. It was like the introduction of some strange and chilling substance into a composition of sweetness and tempered warmth; all was turned into congested ice-blocks. Mr. Lisle was not a man to do things by halves; and when once he had made up his mind to welcome his new son-in-law he gave the welcome with all the cordiality he could command, and with an unrestricted resolve to do as much for that son-in-law as if he were a son. But Mr.

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Lisle was not a man of very flexible manners, and he found it hard to put on an air of cordial affection where he felt no affection ; to "cry content to that which grieved his heart." He could not like Walter Fitzurse ; the more he tried to like him, the less he succeeded. He could not, somehow, trust the young man. Mr. Lisle was utterly unable to explain to himself the reason for such a mood of mind ; but he always felt as if any hour might bring him some painful discovery about his new son-in-law. He felt as some head of a family might feel to whose house an impostor has come, passing off for a long-lost son and heir, and who, while compelled by what seems resistless force of evidence to accept and welcome the claimant, cannot force his heart to warm to the stranger, and finds that something in his blood chills mysteriously every time they come together.

Even Mr. Lisle's affection for his daughter, and his sincere desire to make her happy, could not quite enable him to mask his feelings when he spoke to her about her young husband. Mr. Lisle could not altogether

conceal from Janette the fact that he commiserated her for having such a husband. His very graciousness, his redoubled tenderness to her, told the same story.

Now Janette did not consider herself by any means an object of compassion because she was married to Walter Fitzurse. On the contrary, she regarded herself as a proud and happy girl who has won a splendid prize. She wanted every one, and more especially her father and mother, to regard her in that light ; and her eyes, made doubly quick by love of her husband and jealousy on his behalf, soon saw that her father and mother did not so regard her. Therefore she kept Walter to herself as much as possible ; she withdrew him quietly so far as she could from those who were unable to appreciate him. The rectory was broken up into little chilly groups ; and the ostentation of general forgiveness and reconciliation which was common to all only made the isolation and the chilliness more complete. Walter began to be very glad when people came to the rectory. He dreaded a dinner alone with

the family. He had not much opportunity of displaying his triumph when only Mr. Lisle and Lady Letitia and Camiola and Georgie were there to bear witness to it.

For some days nothing was said about plans and prospects. One day, however, the Rector had a long talk with Walter concerning the future. He thought, and Lady Letitia thought, it would be well for Walter to go to the bar. If he wished, and Janette liked it, he was to be enabled to do this and to be helped forward in every way. Janette would have liked Walter to go into Parliament at once as the representative of some cause concerned with universal charity and the general brotherhood of man. As, however, it was not easy all in a moment to find a constituency for which this programme would absolutely suffice, it was agreed that the parliamentary project should stand over for the present, and that Walter should go on with his studies for the bar, and should make some attempt at literary achievement. To Janette it seemed merely a choice of the field in which Walter was to succeed ; he was

to be this or he was to be that, just as he pleased ; success was equally certain for him. Walter himself was even still a good deal of the same way of thinking. It was finally arranged—and this was a great relief to all parties when it came to be talked about and settled on—that Walter and Janette were to live for the most part in the Rector's town house and were only to visit Fitzurseham whenever they felt so inclined. Janette was delighted ; she would have Walter all to herself, and Camiola would come to them ever so often. Walter was glad, for he felt sat upon at the rectory, and he did not like meeting old Fitzurseham acquaintances in the streets. Fitzurseham was an irreverent, jeering sort of place ; it would jeer at success as well as failure. Walter hated old Jethro Merridew's profound and courtly bow, in which he could not help thinking there was more of sarcasm than of reverence ; he dreaded meeting Pilgrim ; and, after his late adventure, he thought the less he saw of Vinnie Lammas the better.

Those who set themselves to the task of

reforming and reclaiming their erring brothers and sisters, sometimes, it is said, come across a class of penitent with whom it is difficult and even provoking to deal. The penitent of this order, however sincerely sorry for past trespasses, and resolved not to repeat them, is yet disposed to dwell with a certain morbid complacency on the memory of the sins committed, and to regard himself as a species of interesting invalid, the whole story of whose past spiritual ailments cannot be repeated too often or told at too great length. "I am a penitent ;" so we may suppose one of this class to put the case, "and therefore you, my healthy brother or sister, are bound to take a great interest in me and all that concerns me ; and I am especially anxious that you should hear over again a full and detailed exposition of my past sins." This love for dwelling on the incidents of vice seems sometimes hardly in keeping with penitence. Impatient observers are apt to ask which is really the greater vice ; the inconsiderate and hardly conscious sin, or the complacent fondling and cherishing of

sin's worst memories. The penitence of Walter Fitzurse was somewhat of this latter class. It did not appear to occur to him that he ought to be anything but an object of interest and care to Mrs. Pollen and to Albert Romont. He had delivered himself into Romont's hands, and he seemed to consider that Romont was bound to look after him.

Walter had full reliance on Romont. It is a common mistake to suppose that men who are deceivers themselves will never believe that any other man is free from deceit. This is a mistake for which Shakespeare certainly gives no warrant ; Iago is perfectly convinced of the truth and sincerity of Othello. But there was something which made Fitzurse uneasy, which disturbed his sleep of nights, which made him send inquiring and suspicious glances around by day and night. Where was Mrs. Pollen's Albanian servant, Joseph ? It was idle to repose in self-satisfied confidence on Romont's silence and protection so long as there was another man who knew pretty well as much as Romont did, and who could

by no means be trusted so profoundly. Joseph must have known that Fitzurse had attempted to get at Mrs. Pollen's money ; Joseph must have heard the sound of a pistol shot ; the very pledge which Romont gave for Joseph—that what he, Romont, did not tell, Joseph would not tell—only proved that Joseph was in the secret. But how, Walter put it to himself, could Romont be able always to rely on Joseph's secrecy ? Suppose for any reason the Albanian came to be dismissed from Mrs. Pollen's service ? Was it not quite on the cards that he would then endeavour to put the screw on Fitzurse ? And was he dismissed ? If not, where was he ? Suppose Joseph were to tell Pilgrim ? Suppose Pilgrim were to tell Vinnie Lammas ? Suppose Joseph had already told Mrs. Pollen ? Walter felt that on the whole the absence of Joseph was more terrible than his presence.

“ Come to dinner with me to-morrow, you two,” Mrs. Pollen said one day to Walter and Janette. “ Only ourselves ; or any one else you like. I shall like any one you like.”

"Please, only ourselves," Janette pleaded ; "and Camiola, if she can come." This she said doubtfully, thinking of Georgie.

"No, not Camiola," Mrs. Pollen said ; "I suppose you wouldn't be allowed to leave your brother alone here ; and do you know, dear, I think two pairs of spoons would be rather too much for me at one time. I suppose Camiola wouldn't like to come without him ?"

"Oh, I don't know," Janette began in a rather dismal tone, for she saw no evidence of any absorbing passion for Georgie on Camiola's part. Then she stopped. "We'll come alone," she said.

"By the way," Walter asked, "how is your Albanian servant—Joseph, was he called ?"

Nothing could be more innocent and natural than such a question ; but Mrs. Pollen at once thought there was something in the tone of Walter's voice, and a faint tremulous movement of his lip, which told of anxiety, and set her straightway on the watch. She thought she would play him a little.

"Joseph, my Albanian? Oh yes, to be sure; are you interested in him? I didn't think you ever saw him."

"Yes, I have seen him. I am not particularly interested in him; but he was picturesque, I think. Is he not a very good servant, didn't you tell me once?"

"No, I don't think I told you anything about him; but I am glad to hear that you think of him. Yes; he is very good, in a way. He has his own fits, however; he would not get on with everybody. He used to suit me very well; but I have so many odd fits myself."

"He used to suit you?" Walter asked nervously. "Is he gone?"

"Gone, where?" Mrs. Pollen asked, with innocent expression.

"I mean, has he left your service?"

"Do you know now that I should be glad to get your opinion—whether you think such a man as Joseph is really the best sort of servant for a woman like me? Does it look absurd to have an Albanian servant in London?"

"I don't see how that matters. Are you thinking of getting rid of him?"

"Joseph," said Mrs. Pollen gravely, and keeping her eyes fixed on Walter, "is not so easily got rid of as all that." Then she suddenly changed the conversation, and Fitzurse saw that it would not do to try to bring her back to the Albanian just then.

The next day they dined with Mrs. Pollen in Dover Street. Walter looked out for Joseph, but did not see him. He grew more and more uneasy. Suppose Mrs. Pollen had quarrelled with Joseph and dismissed him from her service, would he not be more dangerous than before? After dinner, when they were in the drawing-room, Mrs. Pollen suddenly seemed to bethink herself of something.

"Will you excuse me? I *am* so stupid; I was near forgetting something." She rang the bell and her maid came.

"I want this letter sent over to Fitzurse House at once, and please let Mr. Pilgrim be told that I shall want Joseph to-morrow."

She watched Fitzurse's face keenly with a

side glance, and as she read his expression it was one of relief at finding that Joseph was still to the front. Whereupon she changed her tactics, and asked somewhat sharply of the maid—

“Has Joseph been here to-day?”

“No, ma’am.”

The maid looked surprised at the question.

“Nor yesterday?”

“No, ma’am. I haven’t seen Joseph this ever so long.”

Mrs. Pollen turned away.

“Well, you can send that letter, with the message. Joseph is an eccentric sort of person,” she went on, now addressing herself to Walter and Janette. “There seems a sort of fatality in it that I, being myself eccentric, should get surrounded by more or less eccentric retainers. Joseph is an odd sort of creature.”

Walter looked decidedly embarrassed. As Mrs. Pollen read his thoughts, it appeared clear to her that for some reason Walter was afraid of Joseph, but would much rather have him at hand than absent; that his disappear-

ance would have been a source of alarm. It was her instant resolve to play a little upon this string until it should discourse a good deal more of Walter's secret feelings to her. She had made up her mind that he required looking after. The incident with Vinnie in the churchyard had filled her with anger and contempt for him. "There is only one way," she thought, "to keep him straight, and that is by the influence of fear. He sha'n't make Janette unhappy, or play with little Vinnie's feelings either, if I can help it." So Walter had a real living watcher, and a phantom watcher, and he was afraid of the unseen eye of the phantom, and read no menace in the living eyes of Mrs. Pollen. Mortals are often a good deal like that. They are suspicious of phantoms and off their guard to realities.

It was a very pleasant evening for two of the company at least, and it was interesting for the third. Mrs. Pollen was anxious to make Janette as happy as she could, and she knew well that the best way to make Janette happy would be by making much of Janette's

husband. So she set herself with all her skill to draw Walter out. She set him on to talk about himself and about his plans for the future ; she encouraged him in his hopes, and gave it to be understood in the most delicate way that he should never want a friendly helping hand while she was to the front. Under this genial influence, Walter soon began talking with as much openness and freedom as if he were talking to Janette or to himself. Mrs. Pollen came to learn from what he said that the ambition which under some conditions might only be his bane, might possibly now be his best chance of salvation. She was in a way perfectly sincere. She had grown to dislike him strongly, and she had not much hope in his coming to anything ; but she had set her heart on making him, if it could be, a good husband to Janette.

That was the first night Janette and he were to pass in Mr. Lisle's town house. Walter felt happy at the thought of having now turned his back on Fitzurseham for ever. As they were going, and while Janette

was having her things put on, Mrs. Pollen found a chance of exchanging a word with Fitzurse.

"I have no words to thank you," he said fervently; "no man ever before could have had such a friend in his need."

"Remember," Mrs. Pollen answered, "that you will always have friends for *her* sake. Love her and devote yourself to her, and try to be worthy of her; and you will have friends who will never neglect you. I think the better of you because you have ambition. It is generally the enemy of love they say; but it will not be so in your case, mind—not in your case. Cling to *her*—and you will find that for you ambition and love go hand-in-hand. Dearest Janette, good night."

CHAPTER XXX.

BREAKING.

"OH, this weary, dreadful war," Lady Letitia said to Camiola as they were alone after breakfast the day following. The rectory was very lonely after Janette and Walter had removed to town, and yet there was to Lady Letitia a sense of relief in their absence. Janette cared for nobody now but her husband; and Lady Letitia could not like him, and could hardly even pretend to like him. "That's how our children go," she said. She felt all the more drawn towards Camiola, and was inclined to cling to her with an exorbitant affection.

Camiola knew what was coming when she heard the first words about the war.

"Georgie will have to go back soon, very

soon, I am afraid, Camiola; and he has set his heart on marrying you before he goes, my dear. I think you will have to gratify the poor boy, Camiola. It might as well be first as last, you know; and it will be such a happiness to me to have my Georgie's wife here to pet and to console, and be consoled by, while our young soldier is away at the war." She put her arm fondly round Camiola's waist and kissed her cheek. Camiola's cheek grew red as that of the unfortunate lady in the "Arabian Nights," when the importunate and malignant salesman insists on kissing her; and she felt her heart sink. What could she do but burst into tears? What else could any girl do? Then she told the startled Lady Letitia, amid sobs, exactly what she had told to Georgie. Lady Letitia drew off in cold dismay and misery.

"Well, this *is* hard on the poor boy," Lady Letitia said at last. "It looks very much as if you were playing fast and loose with him, Camiola. I do think you might have made up your mind."

"I have made up my mind," Camiola said, with strong emotion in her voice now. "I told Georgie I would marry him if he liked, and I will marry him if he likes. I never said that I was in love with him. I told him from the very first that I was not in love with him, and that I never could be. I did more than that, Lady Letitia—I told him that I was in love with some one else——"

"But I can't help calling that unwomanly ; yes, very unwomanly," Lady Letitia interrupted. It was a sort of relief to her to get a chance of being what she considered reasonably angry about something. "I am surprised, I am, indeed ; it isn't a bit like you, Camiola !"

"Womanly or unwomanly, it is true all the same," poor Camiola said. "I don't see how it was unwomanly to tell him the truth. I think it wouldn't have been very womanly to deceive him—to let him marry me under the belief that I cared for him, and cared for nobody but him ; I don't think that would have been altogether womanly. Or perhaps it would, as satirists describe woman ;

perhaps deceit would have been the proper womanly thing—more in our line.” Camiola was growing sarcastic now.

“ Oh, it’s all so unhappy ; it’s all so wretched ; I don’t know what is coming over this unfortunate house ! Everything used to go so well, and now everything goes wrong.”

“ I suppose it’s my fault. But I don’t know how or why. I am sure I would do anything in the world to help to make you all happy. Dear, dear Lady Letitia, don’t scold me, but just tell me what I am to do.”

Lady Letitia sighed ; she was in mere despair.

“ I am afraid I don’t quite know, Camiola. I am afraid I am dreadfully unjust to you, my dear, and that I am blaming you for what isn’t your fault. It isn’t any wonder that these young men should fall in love with you—and you know I always set my face against Georgie’s falling in love with you. I was always afraid of it, and I was glad he went away to Egypt for that reason, although, of course, it was a terrible trial ; and now it has all come to pass just as I feared, only a great

deal worse. It is unmanly of Georgie, I know. But you must make allowance for a mother. We don't like our boys to suffer any pain ; and Georgie is suffering pain enough just now, goodness knows."

"I am sure I am not particularly happy," Camiola said. "I have my feelings too. No one seems to me to make much account of them. I am in love, if you must have it ; and still I am willing, if Georgie likes it, to marry him. I declare I don't quite know whether I am doing right or doing wrong in this. I sometimes think it is a dreadful sin ; but after all I think I am bound to make a sacrifice for the sake of all of you, and so I will marry Georgie, and what can I do or say more ?"

"Camiola, there is something in all this that I don't quite understand. I am not a thought-reader like your friend Mrs. Pollen ; I have never studied the art of divining people's minds ; I have never been in the East." Lady Letitia was not well pleased with Mrs. Pollen lately, and had grown jealous of her influence over Camiola. "But

though I am not so clever and accomplished as all that, I can see that you are not letting me know the whole story of this business. You are in love with some one, it seems. I don't name his name, but I suppose I could guess."

"Please don't guess, if you can help it," Camiola said; "one doesn't quite like all one's folly being known."

"Well, never mind about the name. Why don't you marry him, Camiola?"

"I must not tell you, dear Lady Letitia."

"Has he asked you?"

"He has."

"And you refused him?"

"I told him I was engaged to Georgie."

"Was he satisfied with that?"

"Oh no," Camiola answered, reddening.

"Would you marry him if you were free?"

"I don't think so—now."

"And you can't tell me the reason?"

"No, dear, I can't." Camiola was beginning to feel more and more strongly every day that her reason for not marrying Romont

was not a very sufficient one. She had been hurt and offended by his way of finding out the secret of her love, and her womanly resentment carried her so far at first that she told herself and told him that nothing on earth should ever induce her to marry him, and that she would try her very best to conquer her love and to forget him. But this resolve did not seem exactly as if it were likely to increase in strength as time went on, and as the contrast between Georgie's character and Romont's began to show itself more distinctly. Nothing could have been more forbearing, more chivalrous, she thought, than Romont's conduct towards her since the one night when he tried to take her heart by storm. He had never spoken a word of love to her since ; he had never tried to be alone with her ; he had never tried to exchange a glance of meaning with her. He had left his fate and hers absolutely in her hands.

"Well, Camiola, I must not press you. It is your own secret—I suppose girls couldn't live if they weren't having secrets !"

"I suppose not," said Camiola, quietly

"Life does not seem to allow them much chance of living without secrets."

"Anyhow, I must not ask you to tell me. I will speak to Georgie, Camiola; I will reason with him all I can, and I will get his father to reason with him; only I would rather have it all to myself if I could, because I think I could make greater allowance for his weaknesses than a man could, even though his father. Mr. Lisle thinks a man ought to do what is right without hesitation—and of course, so he ought, we all know that. But every man isn't like Mr. Lisle——"

"No, indeed," Camiola heartily assented.

"I am afraid his son is not one of the few who are like him. I will try to make Georgie listen to reason, and he *shall* listen to it. You shall not be persecuted any more, Camiola; you shall be free from this engagement, take my word for that. It would be a sin and a shame, a disgraceful and a cowardly thing for Georgie to insist on marrying any girl under such conditions—a girl who hates and despises him——"

“Oh, Lady Letitia, how can you say such things? how can you be so unjust? Fancy my hating and despising Georgie!”

“You may not say so much even to yourself, Camiola, but I know what you feel by what you have told me. You do hate and despise my unfortunate boy, and it would be the most unmanly thing of him to marry any girl who felt like that. How he ever was able to bring himself to keep pressing you to marry him after you had told him you were in love—positively in love—with this other young man, I can’t understand. But even Georgie must draw the line somewhere, and he shall draw it here. Don’t think about it any more, Camiola; you shall be free again to marry any man whom you do like and for whom you feel respect. I don’t mind acknowledging to you that my poor boy has not exactly acted in a way to win any girl’s respect.”

There was a tone of bitterness in Lady Letitia’s words. Camiola could not fail to understand what it meant. Lady Letitia tried to be just towards her, but could not.

It was only too plain that in her heart she resented Camiola's want of love for Georgie, and blamed Camiola for all that had happened. Even when she saw Georgie's weakness, and was ashamed of it, she felt angry with Camiola for being the cause of his exposure and humiliation. For the time, at least, Lady Letitia's affection for Camiola was chilled, and Camiola felt all the influence of the chill.

Camiola's eyes were moistened with tears as she looked from her window over the garden and the river. She knew that, come what would, she must leave that place for ever. It had been a happy home, the happiest of homes, to her ; and now she must leave it, and part from her dearest, best friends in coldness and almost in anger. "What have I done to deserve this ?" she asked herself again and again. The only fault she seemed to have committed was in ever, under any conditions, consenting to listen to poor Georgie's love story. She now saw that she ought to have refused firmly to make him any promise, that she

ought to have followed the impulse of her heart, and declared that she would never consent to marry any man whom she did not love with all the strength of her whole nature. Yet even when she yielded to Georgie's importunity, she believed that she was faithfully following the dictates of her conscience and her heart, as Mr. Lisle had told her to do. She thought her first duty in life was to the Lisle family; and at that time she did not know that there was any reason why she should allow her heart to give a lodging in it to Romont. If she had known, then, how Romont felt to her, things would have been different; but she did not. Now, how sadly all had turned out! Instead of making the Lisles happy, she was making them miserable; and if Georgie were to go back to the war and be killed there, she would be blamed as the cause of his death. There were moments as she looked on the river when she thought she could quite understand why Vinnie Lammas felt the impulse to try to escape from the trouble of the hour by a plunge into its depths.

All this time Romont was very happy. He felt his happiness ; he enjoyed it, and made the most of it. He had not the least doubt that things would go right in the end ; he had not the least doubt that Camiola would marry him, however the result might be brought about. She loved him. He had kissed her and declared her pledged to him, and he held her pledged to him, and he felt safe in his conviction that she would never marry Georgie Lisle. Romont made himself very busy all this time ; and, as been said before, if the reader finds in these pages no record of his various enterprises and occupations, it is only because we have set ourselves to tell a love story, and not to give a detailed account of the progress of sundry philanthropic undertakings. Romont felt that if he did not keep himself hard at work in this sort of way, he never could restrain himself from haunting Camiola ; and that he did not mean to do. He wished to make it clear to her that he was not going to obtrude himself on her, that he had full faith in her, that he was sure she would take the

right course, that he understood her. If he had been inspired by some supernatural adviser he could not just then have adopted any course better calculated to draw to him Camiola's fondest and most grateful thoughts. She understood him as he understood her ; she loved him all the more because he did not seek her out or put himself in her way ; and the more she came to understand that in this generous abstinence there was also the firm faith of a lover, who regarded her as pledged in fact to him, the more she felt that the pledge was at least a soul's reality.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A REFUGEE.

THAT same night while Camiola was still looking across the scene and the skies, she heard a patter of feet outside her door, and presently a hurried tapping, and "Please may I come in, Camiola?" She opened her door to admit little Alice. The child was in her night-gown, and looked very pale.

"I stole down to speak to you, Camiola," she said, when Camiola had closed the door again. "I know something is going to happen soon; you are going to marry Georgie and to go away, or else you won't marry him; and you will go away from us——"

"My dear little Alice, what has put all these things into your head? You are a foolish little girl."

"I know it all the same," Alice said, with an air of great wisdom, "and I want to tell you that I love you better than Georgie does, and that I think it is very wicked of Georgie to want to marry you and take you away. But I shall love you always ; and I am sure you would love me better only for Georgie—and—and—listen, Camiola ; do you think papa and mamma will love me after you have gone ?"

"They couldn't love you more than they do now, you silly child."

"Oh yes, they could ; they are always loving some one else—Georgie, or Janette, or you, or somebody ; and what I wanted to ask you is, do you think they will love me better after you have gone ? I don't want you to go, Camiola ; but do you think they will care more for me when there's no one here to care for but me ?"

The little thing was perfectly serious, and Camiola felt the deepest compassion for her. The morbid sensitiveness which was strong in Georgie and in Janette, had reached its acutest stage in her. Mere egotism in

Georgie had fomented it into selfishness ; generosity and affection in Janette had softened and purified it into tenderness and devotion ; who should say what it might come to be with Alice as the years grew on her ? Not merely did she yearn to be loved, to be loved by every one, but she yearned to be loved by every one more than any one else was loved. Her child-soul was hungry for a monopoly in love. Camiola now was beginning to understand her fully ; Mrs. Pollen had divined her from the first. Who should say what sort of life she was preparing for herself ? Could any love and any constancy satisfy that inordinate longing to be loved and loved the most ? Would the love of even the most devoted husband be enough ? Are there many husbands who could always give back, without stint and measure ; equal love for that love ? Camiola soothed and pacified the child as well as she might, and got her quietly to bed again ; but Camiola found herself made sleepless by the thought of Alice and of her thirst for the uttermost of every one's love. How little was known of all

this to Lady Letitia ! Camiola was cut to the heart by the child's simple selfishness, outspoken almost directly in the wish that Camiola might be gone, might be out of the way, because her sick fancy made her believe that while Camiola was there she would be cut off from her due share of her parents' love. "Yes, I must go ; it is time," Camiola said. ●

Mrs. Pollen was seated one evening at her organ. She was playing for her own enjoyment. She was alone. The music gradually swept her senses away into distant years and places. Her early days, her later life, floated before her in a sort of spirit-like review. She saw herself a dreamy impassioned child in an Indian kingdom ; no province then, governed by an English civil functionary, but the realm of an independent sovereign ; she saw her married days ; the life of worthless wealth, of hateful ostentation, of vulgar companionship ; she saw her own growing impatience and wilfulness ; her fits of wild eccentric humour ; she saw the white, sunny streets of Athens, and she thought of friends she had known

and loved there, and of the influence they had had upon her. And then her mind was stricken anew with the blow of her husband's sudden death, she not by his side, and the bitter repentance came, and the long, sad season when the remorseful heart sought repentance and peace in stern Jerusalem. And then came in its turn the quickening resolve to go back to England, to be a living woman among living men and women, and try to do good for some one.

She rose suddenly from the organ.

"Am I doing good to any one—for any one?" she asked impatiently and aloud. "Am I not doing harm? Who is any the better for me?"

She would very likely have sat down and sobbed, but that she heard the outer door of the music-room open, and in a moment Camiola came in. From the look on the girl's face Mrs. Pollen knew that something had happened.

"I present myself as a sort of feminine Coriolanus, Mrs. Pollen! You must be a feminine Tullus Aufidius; only that we don't

happen to be enemies, and never were!" Camiola was trying to be sprightly, but her smile was wan and painful ; about as like the smile of gladness as the sun's rays in an east wind are like the sun's rays when the wind is from the west.

"You have left the rectory," Mrs. Pollen exclaimed, coming at once to the point of Camiola's poor little effort at playfulness, her allusion to Coriolanus and Tullus Aufidius.

"Yes, I have come to you ; this extremity hath brought me to thy hearth, dear Tullus Aufidius, or Tulla Aufidia, if that would be better. At least, I want to stay here—or in town with you, I mean—just for a little, if you don't mind—if you will have me ?"

"I was so lonely," Mrs. Pollen said, "I was in such miserable spirits, that I verily believe I was just going to sit down and cry ! You have come like an angel to my relief—only I must feel some compassion for those you have left. My sweet Camiola, sit here by me and tell me all about it."

Camiola made it as short a story as possible, and she bore up bravely, and would not give

way to her feelings until the story was all told. Well, Lady Letitia knew everything ; and Lady Letitia had insisted on Georgie giving up the engagement and setting Camiola free, and Georgie was very wild ; and he was going back to Egypt at once. And though Lady Letitia said she did not blame Camiola, yet Camiola knew what she must feel. " It was useless, Mrs. Pollen ; I couldn't stay there any more. Oh, how fond I was of them all ! And how fond they were of me —until this dreadful thing happened. I loved Lady Letitia and Janette ; I would have given my life for them, oh, I would, I *would* —and this is what it all comes to. And Lady Letitia blames me in her heart, I know, and she will not love me any more." With these words, her story being told, Camiola fairly broke down, and for a time the rest was silence.

Mrs. Pollen indulged her to the full. She let the grief of the girl's affectionate heart have its way. " You are welcome to me, my dear," she said at last, in her low, deep tone, " to my hearth, and to my heart ; for I love

you, Camiola. Stop!" Mrs. Pollen said suddenly, rising. "Mr. Romont!" She had seen Romont pass the window; his key was already in the door.

She expected that Camiola would hurry out of the room; but to her surprise Camiola did not make any movement, except to try to dry her eyes with her kerchief. For, in truth, much as Camiola dreaded meeting Romont just then, she dreaded still more leaving him and Mrs. Pollen together. She knew that Mrs. Pollen's friendship for her would see in all this but a new chance for Romont, and would prompt her to tell him so.

Romont came in, and Mrs. Pollen talked with him a little about things in general, and then she went out of the room. "Better leave them to themselves," she thought. Of course, Romont must have seen that something had happened.

"I am going to stay with Mrs. Pollen for a while in town," Camiola said, trembling as she tried to seem quite at her ease. "They are in trouble at the rectory; Georgie is going back to Egypt at once."

"Oh! Then you won't care much for visitors just now." He was about to go.

"You have been always very kind and considerate to me," she said in rather oblique answer to his words and his movement. "I shall not forget it."

"Why should I worry you? You have trouble enough just now, I dare say. I would rather relieve you of worry than put more on you. I can wait." He spoke the last words significantly.

"I can't promise," she said; "I don't see my way. You must not wait with any idea of *that* kind. It can't be—ever."

"All the same, I can wait, and I do wait. You shall do as you think right. It will come out all right in the end. You shall do with me what you will."

"I wish I could do one thing with you," she said timidly; she was not often timid.

"What is it? You can do anything with me; you know that."

"I wish I could make you happy."

"You can."

"Ah, but not in that way. I can't do

that." Her complexion was heightened as she spoke.

"I can wait," he said again, with a bright smile. "Don't torment yourself thinking over all this thing; let it be as it will. Don't think about me—I am all right; I am perfectly happy, so far as I am concerned myself. It is a different thing about *you*."

"I feel so guilty."

"Guilty of what?"

"I think he will be killed—I know he will; and I am the cause. His mother will never forgive me; she will hate me. I don't wonder; I couldn't blame her."

"But he would have had to go back to his duty, even if you had promised to marry him. You wouldn't have married a man who wouldn't fight for his flag."

"Still, he would have gone away more contented, and his mother would have been satisfied with me; I should have done all that is in me to make them happy. Oh! I am very unhappy; and if anything should happen to him I shall never get over it."

"Let us hope that nothing will happen."

Every fellow is not killed who goes into a battle; and these are not very big battles that our young friend is going into."

"You speak lightly——"

"Do I? Well, I don't feel lightly; I understand your feeling, and I couldn't think lightly about anything that concerns you. I should be only too glad to go in his place, if that would do you any good or bring you any ease of mind."

She looked at him reproachfully. "You ought not to say that," she said.

"Why not—if it would take this load of care and responsibility off your mind?"

"And put such fresh care and responsibility on it? As if I didn't care for——" She was going to say "for you;" but she stopped. "It is no use talking in this way."

"No; and I don't want to put you out in anything. When you want me—if ever you *do* want me—send for me—I shall be at your command—for ever and ever—Camiola."

On the lawn he met Mrs. Pollen.

"Well?" she asked impatiently.

"I am going for a run into the country—I

think I ought to go and see my mother, dear old lady; she will be looking out for me about this time."

"Delightful to see how fond you young men get of your mothers when there is any occasion to make their existence an excuse for getting out of the way of something one is anxious to avoid."

"That isn't exactly my case," Romont said. "But, anyhow, I am awfully fond of my mother, Mrs. Pollen. I call her a dear old lady, but she really isn't any older than I, you know; and she is a good deal better looking, I can tell you."

"I like her immensely, although I never saw her; I always feel that I owe her a deep debt of gratitude for spoiling you. Look how well brought up these Lises were! There are not two better people in the world than their father and mother; and I am sure they were nurtured on the noblest and strictest principles of high-class moral family education; and now see how some of them are turning out! Georgie is a selfish little beast; Alice, the child, is eaten up with

morbid self-consciousness, and a craving to be adored by everybody. Janette is by far the best ; and she, I am told, was always considered the spoilt child. When am I to know your mother ; or am I ever to know her ? ”

“ Whenever you like ; she would be delighted.”

“ Come, would she now ? Don’t you be too sure of that, young man ; don’t you go rashly answering for your mother. You see, I am all very well in my way, but I am not much in the way that women like. You may have perhaps observed that women in general don’t exactly take to me—don’t quite tumble to me, if I may put it so. Well, you are going to see your mother, but you don’t seem to me to be quite in the high spirits of a youth who was rushing off, fired by affection, to clasp a loved parent to his filial breast. Why do you look so gloomy over it ? ”

“ Well, of course going out of London just now isn’t a very pleasant thing for me—— ”

“ No ; then why do you do it ? ”

“ I think I had better be away from this place for a while.”

"I see. Yes, I think you had. That didn't occur to me at first. It might be troublesome for *her*."

"That is what I was thinking of."

"You are quite right. Until something definite happens it would be better for her that you kept out of the way. It is trying for you, of course——"

"I don't care about that. At least, I do care, but it shan't make any difference. What does it matter about me?"

"That comes of being spoiled," Mrs. Pollen said with a smile. "Give my tender regards to your mother. Good-bye. You are a good fellow, Bertie, and you may rest sure of one thing—that your cause shall not suffer in your absence. The dreadful old saying about the absent being always in the wrong shan't prevail against you."

"What I like about him," Mrs. Pollen said to Camiola afterwards, "is that there isn't one bit of the hero and the self-sacrificing martyr about him. He can do a manly thing without giving himself airs."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ORANGE BLOSSOMS WITHER.

WALTER FITZURSE was quite determined to study hard and go in regularly for making a great position at the bar, in literature, and in Parliament. He would have to begin with the bar and literature. The Senate would come in good time. He was not yet quite certain as to the path of paramount distinction which he was to tread, but he did not think it was to the bar. "Gout and a peerage at fifty," Disraeli's definition of success in the law courts, did not seem exactly an enchanting prospect in his eyes or those of Janette; and neither one nor the other would for a moment have taken account of the fact that gout without the peerage is the more ordinary reward of severe legal studies.

Janette yearned for some career for her husband which would have made him a leader of men towards the temple of brotherhood and peace ; and it seemed to her that possibly a seat in Parliament might be the best vestibule to such a shrine.

Walter began by taking chambers at the Temple. A young man who had taken a set of rooms about twice too large for him agreed to let one-half and a share of a small clerk to Walter ; and here was the first sod of the new career turned. Every morning regularly Walter went to his chambers ; and at first he studied law. After a while he found law somewhat dry, and he read a French novel in order to refresh his mind. Then he felt inspired with poetic passion ; and he began a poem full of wild emotion, of yearning to solve all the mysteries of man's destiny. He did not finish this. He strung his lyre to the theme of love ; he got a certain way on in a piece of lyric effusiveness which it would never do to show to Janette. He drew several heads of women with wonderful masses of hair and divinely pencilled

eyebrows ; and he began to doubt whether, after all, Nature had not intended him for a painter or a sculptor. Then he found that it was quite time to go to the club and have some luncheon. He met one or two men at the club, and they smoked and played billiards ; and Walter had to hurry away at last in order to get to his chambers in time to be found there by his wife. It was agreed between them that Janette should always call for him at the chambers at five o'clock. If she didn't come and carry him away, she said, she was sure he would stay there until dinner time blinding his eyes with study. Then they would wander home together ; and Walter would tell her of his studies and of his literary aspirations, and she was never weary of listening. Sometimes she was able to come in her father's carriage ; and then, indeed, Walter was delighted with her. He was proud to drive through the streets of the West End in what he complacently called his wife's carriage. He made it stop at the club, where he told Janette he wanted to leave a message ; and he would get out and keep

Janette waiting a few minutes while he went inside and talked to one or two men, and perhaps one of the men would come out on the steps with him when he was going, and would take off his hat to Janette, and Janette would blush at the idea of being seen waiting for her husband—being seen to have a husband. And then Walter and she would go off together ; and it would be hard to say which was the more proud, she of the husband, or he of the carriage. This was what the outer public saw. Camiola already saw something more.

“Beastly cad, that fellow,” Captain Cannon observed one day to Mr. Montagu Broom, as the two stood on the steps of Walter’s club, and saw Walter and his wife drive off.

“Oh, come, now, I don’t go quite so far as that, don’t you know,” Mr. Montagu Broom replied, in gentle deprecation. Mr. Montagu Broom appeared to be one of Walter’s closest friends at the club. It was a junior club, and was made up chiefly not of juniors, but of seniors who had not been able to procure admission to any other

club. There were some disappointed old soldiers and a few unpromising young soldiers there; some amateur authors who, being able to give good dinners, occasionally brought real professional authors to dine there. A good many stockbrokers and other gentlemen from the city were enrolled on the books, and there were some hunting men from the shires, who liked the rather highly flavoured tone of the institution. The club was emphatic in everything. There were peculiarly gorgeous fur coats to be seen there in the winter, and the earliest and most startling white hats and white waistcoats in the summer. There was a common talk of deep play in connection with this club.

When Walter first had the happiness to be made a member, he was under the impression that he was received into one of the most fashionable and exclusive coteries of the metropolis. Mr. Montagu Broom was one of the city men; he had no end of money to spend.

"Don't think he's so bad as all that," Mr. Broom pleaded. "He don't quite know his

way about yet ; but he will in time. He's a deuced smart fellow. Got a lot of money with his wife, I'm told. She's an awfully pretty girl, though a trifle pale for my taste."

"Told he hasn't got a penny," Captain Cannon said sententiously. "She comes of a good family, I hear."

"*He* does, too," Mr. Broom observed.

"Don't you believe it. Mark my words, sir ; that fellow is a cad ; a cad and a sweep."

Now Captain Cannon was a man of good family, who had somehow got at odds with his good family and with fortune generally. Mr. Montagu Broom was a man who had come up from nobody knew what, and had probably taken the name of Montagu Broom for what Mr. Kinglake calls "the sake of euphony." Mr. Broom, therefore, was anxious to make out that all his friends were men of good family ; Captain Cannon was always prompted by some mysterious impulse to question their right to that distinction.

Walter and Janette drove away proud and happy, in ignorance of the discussion that was going on about them between the two

eminent members of the club. Even if Walter had heard the whole debate, every word, he would not have been displeased. He would, on the contrary, have been highly gratified. He would have taken it as a tribute to his importance; the disparaging comments would have become in that sense a sort of panegyric. It was something to be talked about; if one is not praised, the next best thing is to be censured. To be ignored is the worst fate that can befall. This was Walter's unwritten creed; he never could see such real difference between notoriety and fame. He knew people talked about him now a good deal, and he was delighted.

Camiola was wandering purposeless on the lawn at Fitzurse House the first day of her stay—the day of her arrival. She came on Christian Pilgrim.

"Mr. Pilgrim! I have not seen you for a long time—a very long time. I hope you are well." She held out her hand.

Pilgrim at first was confused and awkward. He had not spoken to her, he had hardly ever seen her, since the day when, carried

away by a wild passion, he made such a foolish figure of himself. He did not like to think of that now. He had no doubt in his mind that Romont was in love with her, and he could not but believe that she must be in love with Romont. No one could help loving *her*, he thought, but he could not now understand how any force of passion could have made a man like him, poor elderly Christian Pilgrim, proclaim such a love to such a woman. She was looking pale and not happy ; a shade of melancholy made her more beautiful than ever in poor Pilgrim's eyes. It made her seem more like the kind of divinity he would have worshipped—had often worshipped in his dreams of night and dreams of day—a being in woman's form, full of divine sympathy with all the trials and sadnesses of mortals.

“It is a long time,” he timidly said ; and then stammered out, “I hope you have forgiven me, Miss Sabine ?”

“Oh yes ; long since. Let us not speak of that, Mr. Pilgrim, it was nothing ; I said then I forgave it.”

"It was so wrong of me, I so forgot myself, and I didn't know then half how good you were."

"I don't want to think any more about it. I am not angry; we will forget it and be friends."

Another girl would have hastily passed on and left him with the conviction that she still was offended with him, and so kept his pain all the longer alive. But Camiola never, when she could, did anything by halves, and she had an instinctive perception that if Mr. Pilgrim and she were to be good friends again they must begin at once, and she must put him on the footing of friendship from that moment. So she stopped in her walk and showed that she was inclined to get into talk with him.

"Vinnie Lammas is so grateful to you," he said after a moment. "She is never done saying how much she owes to you."

"Vinnie! oh, I am very fond of Vinnie. She has a true little heart and a tender nature, and I hope she will be very happy. Oh, here comes Mr. Fitzurse."

Walter Fitzurse indeed was seen lounging up one of the walks from the gate with that air of general ownership of everything which was among his many impressive qualities. He looked a little surprised at seeing Camiola and Pilgrim in seemingly close conference. Walter was all for the brotherhood and equality of men when he was making eloquent speeches for Janette's ear; but his personal feeling was, that fellows like Pilgrim ought to keep their distance. He made a most graceful bow to Camiola, and tried to be at once friendly, dignified, and condescending with Pilgrim. Pilgrim turned abruptly away.

"I do not know how it is, Miss Sabine, but I have an instinctive consciousness when men dislike me. I am sure our poor friend Pilgrim does not like me."

Camiola was wondering whether the same instinctive consciousness served him in the case of women. She had always disliked him. She had distrusted him from the very first moment. His presence constrained and chilled her. She could talk freely to almost every one she met except to him. Lately

she had come to have better reason for her dislike than before, for she could see that he cared nothing for Janette, and that he was growing tired even of pretending to adore her. Camiola had seen this so clearly, that she almost felt tempted to assume a right on the ground of her friendship with Janette, and remonstrate with him. Even for his own sake she had sometimes thought it might be well to do this, for assuredly, if Janette's father and mother found that there was any cause for complaint they would resent it. But she had shrunk from doing anything that would seem to bring her too much into his confidence.

"I don't think Mr. Pilgrim is a man of many dislikes," she said coldly ; "he always seems to me a kind-hearted and a just man."

"Your kind-hearted and just people can have their dislikes, I can assure you. But I can see that you would find it hard to understand such feelings ; you are far above narrow jealousies and spites."

"I am sure I am not half so far above

them as Mr. Pilgrim is ; I never saw any jealousy or spite in him."

"You are too good to see——"

"Oh, I don't care for insipid goodness of that kind. If you mean that for a compliment, Mr. Fitzurse, it doesn't attract me at all. How is Janette?"

"I would much rather talk about you than about Janette. Janette and I get on very well ; but I have not found her all that—well, that a man whom you honoured with your love would find in you."

Camiola lost her temper. She had heard something like this before.

"You tell this to me," she said ; "to me, the nearest friend of your wife ; to me, who love Janette better, far better than myself ! You come to me, her friend and sister, more than sister, and you hint your complaints of her, and you try to excuse yourself for not understanding her, and you think I can listen to such stuff ! You have taken her out of her happy home where her people adored her ; you have brought her into anger with them for the first time in all their lives, and

now you go on as if—well, to be sure—she was not quite worthy of your sublime attention.”

“It was all done in great haste,” he said; “we hardly knew what we were doing.”

“She didn’t know what she was doing,” Camiola exclaimed in generous anger. “I did; yes, I never believed that she was doing a good thing for herself; I never trusted you.”

“I can forgive anything you say to me, because it shows the nobleness of your friendship for her. How generous and brave you are, Miss Sabine.”

“Generous and brave, because I stand up for my dear, darling Janette? What sort of women can you have known, Mr. Fitzurse, if you call that generous and brave?”

“Women generally are not quite so devoted to other women, I have always heard. But you can afford to be generous, you can have no fear of rivalry anywhere.”

“Rivalry—in what?”

“Well, in the world’s admiration, I suppose.”

"Were we talking about the world's admiration? What do I know about the world? What have I to do with its admiration?"

"Our own little world is *the* world to all of us; and in that world you have its whole admiration. Who that knows you does not admire you?"

She grew red and hot, and she did not want to show too much anger. He was becoming dangerously, odiously complimentary in his words and his way of putting them, and Camiola was especially anxious not to show any perception of such a meaning.

"Thank you," she said quietly, "that is very kind of you. I do like a great many people, and I am glad if they like me; but we were talking about Janette."

"You have the love of all the men who know you, I think," he said in a sort of dreamy way, as if he were only talking aloud. "I verily believe poor Pilgrim adores the ground you tread on."

This was said in such a way as to make it seem a mere playful and harmless allusion.

Walter began, indeed, to be afraid that he had gone rather too far.

“Very few men whose respect and regard I should value more than I do Mr. Pilgrim’s. But I wanted to say something about Janette, Mr. Fitzurse; I shouldn’t have begun this talk only for you. But as you did begin it I think I must say something.”

He shrugged his shoulders melodramatically.

“I know what you want to say; I can guess it; and I know that everything you say will be just and right.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SPECTRAL ILLUSIONS.

CAMIOLA was preparing hastily in her own mind quite an eloquent and impressive, while, at the same time, highly politic and ingenious little speech, in reply to Fitzurse's invitation. She intended to appeal to him on behalf of Janette and of himself, to try to bring him to a sense of the foolishness as well as the ingratitude of the part he was playing, and, at the same time, to evade all admission of any meaning in his style of compliment to herself. She would not condescend to acknowledge that she believed there was any sinister intent in his words of compliment, or to notice them as compliments at all. We do not know what effect the eloquence and ingenuity of the speech might have produced on Walter

if it had been spoken ; but it was not spoken. Mrs. Pollen coming out of the house interrupted the conversation.

Camiola had been waiting for Mrs. Pollen, who was to return to town for the evening ; she had been wandering, as we have said, purposeless on the lawn while Mrs. Pollen was making her preparations.

“ Oh ! you are here,” Mrs. Pollen said, in not too gracious recognition of Walter’s presence. “ I didn’t expect to see you on this side of the water. How did you tear yourself away from the fascinations of the West End ? How are all the countesses and marchionesses ? How will they get on without you ? ”

Fitzurse smiled a rather feeble sort of smile. He did not like to be chaffed, especially before a pretty girl. “ I don’t know ; we are not much acquainted with marchionesses and countesses ; we are very quiet people.”

“ We ? who are we ? ”

“ Well, Janette and I, of course.”

“ To be sure. I had quite forgotten

Janette." This was said with a significance which made Walter turn pale. He could not afford to lose his temper with Mrs. Pollen, or he would then have lost his temper most assuredly. What Mrs. Pollen meant him to understand was, "I had forgotten to think of Janette as a being inseparable from you." He quite understood her meaning. "Well, how is Janette, as you have mentioned her?"

"She is very well, thank you."

"Camiola dear, we are going directly. Will you get your things on?"

Camiola disappeared into the house, glad to escape, yet feeling as if she ought to have delivered her speech.

"You couldn't guess perhaps why I came over to Fitzurse House so soon," Walter said, with a desperate attempt to seem at his ease.

If the attempt had not been so evidently made, Mrs. Pollen might perhaps not have known quite so quickly that he was not at his ease. "I dare say I could guess if I tried. Shall I try?"

"If you please. I should be curious to know if you really could guess."

"By the way, I don't guess, in that sense of the word—in your sense. I never could guess anything in that way ; I see things, and I draw conclusions. Well, suppose I say that you came over to see about my Albanian, Joseph."

This was a bold shot of Mrs. Pollen's, but its very boldness would in any case have served her purpose. If Walter had not been thinking of Joseph, the mere mention of his name would convey to him the idea that in Mrs. Pollen's mind there was some reason why he should be thinking of Joseph, and thus set his alarms all going once again. If, on the other hand, he had come to ask something about Joseph, the correctness of her conclusions could not but impress him. It did impress him. Mrs. Pollen was right ; he had come in the hope to find out something about Joseph. Joseph was his spectre ; Joseph unseen was even worse than Joseph seen. A great actor produced a fine effect by making Hamlet after he has

first seen the ghost glance round him every other moment with uneasy eyes, expecting the awful presence again, and disturbed by the absence not less than by the apparition. Walter's mind was thus wrought on by the absence of the Albanian. Joseph was absent indeed for this moment ; but when might he not be present again, and for what purpose ?

Mrs. Pollen, it must be owned, found a certain unchristian pleasure in observing and working upon Walter's feelings and his fears. She had been hearing bad stories about him in the West End lately, and she was becoming pitiless so far as he was concerned, while very pitiful indeed for Janette.

"Yes, it was about Joseph," Fitzurse answered with seeming carelessness. He was becoming master of himself. "The fact is, I understood from you that you did not feel quite certain about keeping him on ; and I was talking to some men, and I didn't know if I might not be in the way of placing him well, if you would like to have him placed here in London."

"Would you think of employing him your-

self?" she asked, and she fixed her eyes on him.

"I? Oh, well—I couldn't afford, you know. Why do you ask?"

"If you could take him into your service it might not be a bad thing. Joseph is a peculiar sort of person; he is very faithful to his master; he has all the devotion of the wolf-dog or the bloodhound. If I had committed a murder—or tried to commit one—I should feel perfectly safe in letting Joseph know all about it—so long as he was in my service. But I should try not to lose him if he had such a secret of mine in his keeping. He has some capital qualities—that is why I think it might not be half a bad thing if you were to employ him—always supposing he would have you as a master. He might not, perhaps."

Mrs. Pollen must have been far less keensighted than she was if she had not noted the effect which her words, sent as a mere shot in the darkness, wrought on their victim. Walter turned a livid pale and positively trembled. His eyes were lit by a blue

light of fear, and anger, and something like hate.

"What on earth can this be?" Mrs. Pollen meanwhile was asking of her own mind. "He can't have been doing any murder, surely? He can't have been trying to kill somebody? Yet I have certainly made a hit in that direction."

"Mrs. Pollen, I really don't understand you. I don't even pretend to understand you."

"Don't you? Pretend that you cannot understand me! There—I should like to see you do *that*. Just look me straight in the face and say you don't understand me; that you have not the least idea of what I mean! That will do. You would never make a decent amateur actor; you will never be as good as Bertie Romont at that sort of business either."

Walter started at the mention of Romont's name.

"Bertie Romont is a very good amateur actor," she went on. "I couldn't get things out of him as easily as I can out of you. So,

then, he knows all about it too? We are quite a *partie carree*: you and I, and Joseph and Romont! Well, if a secret confided to three persons besides him whom it specially concerns can be kept for ever, the world is growing less communicative than it used to be in my younger days, and the reeds now would never blab the secret of King Midas! You want to know, I suppose, why I have brought all this up just now?"

He only nodded his head. He was quite overmastered for the moment.

"I'll tell you. I have been hearing bad tales about you. I don't know that your wife complains of you as yet, but she has reason to complain. Now, mind; I told you before that your love—I mean your love for Janette—would be the best title of your ambition to success. We have given you an amnesty for the past, some of us who know; but it is conditional, not absolute. Don't provoke us, and everything may go on well with you still. But, remember, the amnesty is conditional, and there are three people, as well as yourself, in the secret. There—that

will do for the present. I am sorry we have to return to town so quickly, Miss Sabine and I. Miss Sabine is going to stay with me in town for the present. We shall see you, of course, and Janette? The carriage is ready, Camiola dear."

Camiola had returned. As she said good-bye to Walter she held his hand for one little second, as if in a kind of mute appeal. She longed to make her little speech to him about Janette, to plead for Janette's happiness, to warn him that he would do himself and her only harm if he set people thinking that he neglected her. But there was no chance to speak the little speech now, and perhaps, after all, she could do no good by speaking it. She took her hand away, and a moment after Walter found himself alone on the lawn of Fitzurse House in a condition of semi-stupefaction.

Now if we might venture on the frivolity of asking any reader to play a sort of game with us, we should like to ask that reader what he or she thinks was the first distinct sensation in Walter Fitzurse's mind when he began to

pull himself together and collect his ideas out of the muddle of mere stupefaction. If this story has at all succeeded in conveying a clear idea of Walter's nature, ways, and temperament, the answer ought to be easy. The first sensation of which he was conscious was the thought that Camiola had taken leave of him with a peculiar pressure of the hand. The kindly, generous, self-forgetful impulse which moved her to give that half-unconscious pressure, the impulse which, translated into words, would have said, "Oh, before it is too late—for her sake and your own sake ; for the sake of those who love her, and those who at least wish you well, take thought and do not throw away her love"—that impulse was for the moment wholly misunderstood by Fitzurse. To him it was evidence of a certain tender interest in him. It was part of his creed that every woman, however well meaning and well brought up, loves praise, and even flattery, and is open to the influence of any words from any man which profess admiration and love. There are men who make it their

creed that women are all turned out by nature on precisely the same pattern, like Nuremberg tin soldiers ; that know one and you know all ; and that the touch of nature which makes the whole woman-world kin is sensibility to admiration and to professions of love. Above every other feeling in his mind now there soared the exulting thought that he had made love to Camiola, and that Camiola had been touched by his words. That slight momentary pressure of the hand made a bond of sentiment between them, he thought. His vanity was inflated, and soared with him into the very skies.

He passed out of the gates of Fitzurse House. Of course, as he walked along the sense of his danger came back on him. He did not doubt any longer that Mrs. Pollen knew his whole secret—Mrs. Pollen who, as she drove off with Camiola, was unusually silent, perplexing herself with conjectures as to what Walter could possibly have done, or tried to do, which made him so much affrighted when the dial which spoke not “made shrewd sign and pointed full upon

the stroke of murder." Well, he must be more careful for the future. It was clear that he was safe in Mrs. Pollen's hands so long as he was properly loving and attentive to Janette; and he would be properly loving and attentive to Janette for the future. Joseph of course was a danger; but somehow he fancied that Mrs. Pollen meant to convey the idea that she could keep Joseph safely in hand if only he, Walter, did not provoke her wrath against him. After all, what was it that could be brought against him? He had not done any murder; a sudden act of passion ending in nothing could not come to much even if brought against him. He had not stolen any money; it was only at the very worst an inference that he had ever intended to steal; and he knew that he never had any such intention; he always meant to pay back the money again. He was becoming cheered and consoled in mind. Oh yes; it would be all right. He would return to his devotion for dear, sweet Janette who loved him so; he would absolutely get out of the flirtation with

Lady Pallas; evidently Mrs. Pollen had been hearing of *that*; that was what she meant by the bad tales people had been telling her, and by her allusion to countesses and marchionesses. He would be very attentive to Janette for the future; and in his mind there was the sweetening thought that after all Camiola Sabine would be a good deal with Janette now that she was going over to London to stay with Mrs. Pollen. Things began to look brighter and better for our young self-elected representative of the illustrious house of Fitzurse. It was a beautiful evening, too, as he walked along meditating.

The flirtation with Lady Pallas was a very harmless piece of business, so far as Lady Pallas was concerned. There was in Lady Pallas's mind no thought of harm, in the ordinary sense of the word. Scandal had never breathed a doubt of the purity of Lady Pallas's reputation. Only there can be an immense amount of pain wrought and evil done by ladies on whose moral character taint of suspicion has never fallen. Hearts may be broken and homes made unhappy by

such ladies. Lady Pallas was the wife of the Earl of Pallas, a distinguished diplomatist, who had married somewhat late in life. Lady Pallas liked to be talked of, and she liked to have men about her who were talked of, and she had taken very much to Walter Fitzurse after his romantic marriage. She was very friendly with Janette, and was amused by Janette's theories of life and her adoration of her husband, and Lady Pallas thought it would be good fun to make a victim of Walter and show him off as her victim. She was still young and handsome and attractive, and poor Walter felt all the devotion of his nature pour out to handsome women of rank. So he let Lady Pallas make a fool of him while thinking in his own mind that he was a very splendid figure in society ; and Janette was already beginning to suffer and to let her suffering be seen, which gratified Lady Pallas immensely.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OLD WOUNDS—HEALING.

THE evening was already beginning to fade as Walter turned from Fitzurse House. The summer itself was fading into autumn. Soon the season would be all over; it was now in its latest embers. Walter had been invited to go down into the country with Lord and Lady Pallas; but now he thought he would not go, although he longed to see one of the country houses of the class whom Dr. Johnson would have called the great. But it would be better not, he thought; on the whole much better not. Janette would not like it, and would be jealous; poor dear Janette! He could not help smiling complacently to himself at the thought of Janette being jealous about him and the attentions

paid to him by a great lady. The evening sun shed one of its latest rays across his smiling face.

He would not pass through the odious streets of Fitzurseham, and perhaps be grinned at by the envious inhabitants. It used to be at one time a favourite theory of Fitzursehamites that Walter was destined for greatness of some kind or other, and was certainly destined to rise in the world and get into good society. Yet, now that he had risen and got into good society, Fitzurseham did not appear to feel proud or gratified at his elevation, but, on the contrary, showed a disposition to grumble at him and jeer at him. We have already spoken of the Fitzurseham population as an irreverent population who would jeer at success as well as failure. In fact there was no telling what Fitzurseham would not jeer at if it felt so disposed. One might be the glass of fashion and the mould of form, and yet a ragged, bandy-legged Fitzursehamite would be as likely as not to shoot out the tongue of derision at him and hold him up to public

contempt. A Fitzursehamite *gamin* with dirty face, bare feet, and torn pantaloons never to be mended, would proclaim himself rigidly exacting in regard to female costume, and would make disparaging comments on the get-up of Mrs. Langtry if she happened to pass along his way and he disapproved of her bonnet or her dress. One might have saved the State, and yet if he happened to wander along a Fitzurseham street might find himself only an object of sincere contempt and loudly expressed ridicule. It is no wonder that Walter Fitzurse, an old resident who had cut the place, should have felt strong objection to parading its streets on foot in the evening.

He knew a way near the rectory and by the river bank from which he could reach one of the piers of the river steamers without tempting much of the commentary of Fitzurseham. He was moving along this quiet path now when forming his resolve not to go to Lady Pallas's, and when the setting sun illumined his complacent smile and dazzled his eyes. Because of the dazzled

eyes, he did not see that he was near running into the arms of a pair who were turning round a corner, a man and a woman. The woman was leaning on the man's arm, and they were in deep conversation. Walter might perhaps have passed on without noticing them further, but that they stopped in some doubt or confusion apparently; and then Walter looked at them and saw that they were Vinnie Lammas and Christian Pilgrim. Vinnie drew back a little disturbed; Pilgrim maintained his usual gloomy composure.

"Vinnie—Miss Lammas!" Walter exclaimed, taking off his hat and making a bow worthy of a prince doing salutation to a princess. "Pilgrim—how do again, Pilgrim? Lovely evening—going for a walk? Hope Mrs. Lammas is well?"

"Mamma is quite well, thank you," Vinnie said, with heart a little throbbing. Pilgrim could feel it throb against his arm. He withdrew his arm. "Mr. Pilgrim was kindly seeing me home. Mrs. Pollen has gone to town for the night."

"Yes, I know," Walter said; "I have just been there; I am going to town too. Good evening, Vinnie—Miss Lammas; good evening, Pilgrim. My kind regards to Mrs. Lammas."

Christian Pilgrim said never a word. Walter bowed again and moved off. But when the two had passed on he stopped for a while and looked after them. He became very curious to know whether Pilgrim would go into Vinnie's house with her and remain for any time there. He felt curious to know whether they were going straight to Vinnie's home, or whether a long walk by the river side might not precede Vinnie's return to her mother. He had, one might have thought, his heart's desire. He had carried off and married the pretty granddaughter of an earl; he was carrying on a flirtation with the wife of an earl; he could still feel the momentary impress of Camiola Sabine's hand; and yet he suddenly felt a pang of jealous passion at the thought of Christian Pilgrim taking a walk with Vinnie Lammas, perhaps lingering with her by the river, accompanying her to

her home, and going in and sitting with her in the room which Walter remembered so well, and of which the memory sometimes brought a feeling of regret and sometimes a shudder, according to the mood which happened to have possession of him. He felt devoured by curiosity to know whether Pilgrim would return at once to Fitzurse House, having seen Vinnie to her home, or whether he would go in with her and make a long stay. Braving all risk of being recognized and flouted by jibing Fitzursehamites, he followed slowly the path Pilgrim and Vinnie had taken. He kept them in view all the time until he saw that they were close to Vinnie's house. Then he fell back a little and waited. There was a beetle-browed archway forming the entrance to a narrow lane which led in a crooked and curving way into one of the meanest and squalidest parts of Fitzurseham, parts which Walter had never penetrated. In the shadow of the archway the young man stood and waited and watched. An hour passed, and Pilgrim did not come out of Vinnie's house.

Walter could wait no longer; he had to return home. His projects of moral and philosophical reform were disturbed by what he had observed; his mind was disturbed by it. He could not bear the idea of Christian Pilgrim, on whom he had always looked down, coming now to supplant him in the heart of Vinnie Lammas. It would have pleased him if the girl had always remained faithful to the memory of her first lover. It appeared to him as if Pilgrim were doing him a positive wrong. He was vexed, and felt humbled. It was too much, he said to himself; he wasn't going to stand it.

Meanwhile Christian Pilgrim was spending a quiet and happy hour or two with Vinnie Lammas and her mother. He was having tea with them, after the old fashion of the kindly days before Vinnie had been disappointed in love. Things indeed were gradually restoring themselves to the old condition of quietude and something like contentment in Vinnie's house. Mrs. Lammas was delighted with the improved fortunes of her daughter, with the friends she had made and the

prospect that seemed to be opening up to her. All that was wanted to make them both happy now was that Vinnie should forget altogether her love for Walter Fitzurse; and Mrs. Lammas thought with much secret satisfaction that this seemed very likely to come to pass. Mr. Pilgrim was undoubtedly very attentive to Vinnie, and although it was so far in a fatherly sort of way, yet Mr. Pilgrim was not nearly so old as he looked, and he had a very good position as manager of Mrs. Pollen's property, and Mrs. Pollen made no secret of her regard for him, and her willingness to do anything in her power to help him to gain any object he had in view; and there was no handsome young admirer now to put into contrast with him; and in short Mrs. Lammas had made up her mind that Pilgrim would some time or other ask Vinnie to marry him, and that on the whole Vinnie could not do a better thing. Therefore she saw with pleasure that the two seemed day by day to grow more friendly, more intimate, more necessary to each other; and she waited in

quiet confidence for the moment when Vinnie would come to her and tell her that Pilgrim and she were going to be married.

Vinnie was indeed becoming day by day more .necessary to Christian Pilgrim. By imperceptible degrees his friendship for the girl, his compassion for her, his sympathy with her, were deepening and broadening into a tenderer feeling. After his one wild outbreak of passion about Miss Sabine, he had fallen into a condition of mental dejection and shame which for a time made life almost unbearable. He had been roused out of the depth of this depression for the first time by the shock of Vinnie Lammas's attempt at suicide. In his anxiety about her and his pity for her, he forgot for a while himself and what he considered his degradation, and he began to feel grateful to the girl because she had made him think of her and not of himself. When Vinnie became part of the establishment at Fitzurse House, Pilgrim was constantly directed by Mrs. Pollen to see the girl home and to take care of her generally, Mrs. Pollen having her own views and purposes about

both of them. So it came that Pilgrim renewed his old intimacy with the mother and daughter, but under conditions very much changed, and in a frame of mind very much changed also.

"Don't you think Vinnie is looking much better, Mr. Pilgrim?" Mrs. Lammas asked, when Vinnie had left the room for a moment to see about the tea.

"She is indeed greatly changed for the better," Pilgrim said. "I was afraid she would have a shock to-day. Do you know that we met *him*?"

"Met whom, Mr. Pilgrim?"

Mrs. Lammas was a little slow of apprehension. She really did not know at the moment of what "him" Christian was speaking.

"That young man—Walter Fitzurse. I don't know what he was doing about here. Yes, he stopped and spoke to her."

"My! I am surprised. How did Vinnie bear it?"

"Very well; she did not seem to mind so much as I was afraid she would."

"I *am* so glad. But I am sure she wouldn't." Mrs. Lammas expressed this conviction quite as much for the purpose of reassuring herself as of assuring Pilgrim. "She don't care about him any more, Mr. Pilgrim; she will soon forget him altogether, I hope."

"I hope so too." Pilgrim hoped, but was not very confident. He thought Vinnie had borne the meeting very well; but he had seen, too, how the crimson flush came over her face, and how she trembled; and little as he knew of women and their ways, he knew enough to know that Vinnie had not yet got over all her love for Walter Fitzurse.

Nothing more was said then. Vinnie came back, and they had tea and talked pleasantly over various things quite as in the old time. Vinnie was in what seemed to be remarkably high spirits. Pilgrim was delighted with her mood and her ways. He was getting very fond of the girl in a half-fatherly, half-lover-like sort of way. When he was going, Vinnie came out with him to the door-step, just as she used to do in the old time—with him and of course with Walter too. There, just in

front of them, were the windows of the house where Walter used to live. Vinnie's eyes turned that way with a look which would have filled with misgiving the heart of an admirer more skilled in reading the mood of a woman than poor Christian Pilgrim. It was a tender and beautiful autumn evening; the mild light of the "Shepherd's Star" fell on Vinnie's pale upturned face and eyes, now wistful and melancholy.

"It was strange, wasn't it?—meeting him to-day," she said suddenly, sinking her voice as if there were any one but Pilgrim to hear her words.

"You bore it very well," Pilgrim said encouragingly; "I was glad to see that, Vinnie. You will be quite strong in time; and you will be happy."

She remained silent, looking still at the windows of the house which she once used to watch with so affectionate an interest. Her silence made Pilgrim feel a little uneasy. It was as if a damp cloud had suddenly come over his prospect.

"Yes; you bore it well," he said once

again. "That was the first time you saw him—since that Sunday?"

"Yes; at least no, not exactly. I saw him once before."

Vinnie spoke with great hesitation now. In truth she had almost thought at first of saying "Yes" in an unqualified way to Pilgrim's question; but, to do her justice, she always tried to be a truthful girl.

"Saw him once before—since that time, do you mean?"

"Yes, Mr. Pilgrim; I saw him once before."

"Where was that, Vinnie? Tell me about that. I didn't know anything of it. Where did you see him?"

"Here—I mean of course in Fitzurseham; it was quite by accident. I never thought of meeting him."

"Here, in Fitzurseham. Where in Fitzurseham?"

"In the old churchyard. I went in there one day when I was going from mamma's to Fitzurse House; and I stayed a few moments alone; and then he came in."

"And he talked to you?"

"Yes, Mr. Pilgrim; he talked to me."

"What did he talk to you about?"

"Oh, asked me to forgive him, and that. It didn't last long—I wouldn't stay. He said he was very sorry about me; and, do you know, he had never heard until that moment that I tried to kill myself?" This was said in a woman's last despairing effort to try and make people believe that her faithless lover was not, after all, quite so bad as they might have thought him.

Pilgrim's heart sank.

"You never told me of this, Vinnie," he said gloomily.

"No," she said in a despondent voice, "I didn't. What would be the good? It didn't matter. It couldn't make any change."

"Does your mother know?"

"She does not. I didn't tell her. I was afraid it would make her feel uncomfortable. She would be fancying things."

"Fancying things! Yes, very likely," Pilgrim thought. He could not help fancying things as he looked now into Vinnie's troubled

face. "You didn't see him again after that—until to-day?" he asked.

"No, not until to-day. It was all a mere accident. He doesn't come here much now—to Fitzurseham, I mean. I don't suppose I shall ever see him again."

CHAPTER XXXV.

“ IF ONLY HE COMES BACK.”

A DARK cloud had fallen on the lonely rectory. Weeks had dragged on. Georgie was gone back to Egypt, in his parting moments raving to his mother about his disappointment and his love, and gloomily giving her to understand that he would put himself in the way of the first Arab spear that came within his range of vision. Janette never came near the place now. She was beginning to have some reasons of her own for a reluctance to meet her mother and be questioned perhaps about Walter. Camiola had gone, in grief and almost in anger, never, Lady Letitia supposed, to come back again. The poor lady sometimes asked herself impatiently what she had done that Heaven

should use her thus. She had never meant anything but for the best; she could not see even yet that she had in any way done wrong; and yet this was what came of all. Her pain was increased by the conviction that her husband somehow blamed her in his heart. Mr. Lisle certainly did not show this in his manner; at least, he did not show any anger; but in his looks there was a certain compassionate tenderness that seemed to Lady Letitia like a resolve to spare her any reproach in her desolate condition. There did not seem much to live for now. If she were dead Mr. Lisle would grieve for her, but he would have his ministrations to attend to, and the poor of Fitzurseham to look after; and the world would go its way even for him much the same as before. Every day she expected to hear that the Arab spear-point had found her boy.

Alice clung to her mother, sometimes wearying her with talk which was not sympathetic. "How could the poor child be expected to enter into my feelings?" Lady Letitia asked herself.

One day as they were walking up and down the lawn, awaiting Mr. Lisle's return, Alice suddenly clasped her mother's hand and said—

"Mamma, don't you think we are very happy now, you and I together here? Don't you think we are?" She looked eagerly into her mother's face. Lady Letitia was surprised by the question.

"I hope you are always happy, my little Alice. You are too young to be anything but happy. When people are not young they are seldom quite happy."

"Oh, but I was unhappy, ever so unhappy, lots of times, almost always, I think, until now. But ain't you very happy now?"

"Well, my dear, you know poor Georgie is away, and he may be in danger; and then we don't see Janette; and Camiola is gone for the present, and I am sometimes uneasy."

"Yes, but that is why I like it, that's why I am so happy. I have you all to myself, and you have only me to be fond of, and I don't want anybody ever to come back; I

would so much rather have you and me all day together—and you fond of me.”

The poor troubled mother looked into the child's face, sparkling as it was with all the happiness of sated and morbid egotism, and there was something in it and in the whole condition of things that positively frightened her, and she burst into tears.

One morning there came a telegram for her with news that made her draw a deep breath. Georgie was one of those ordered off on an expedition into the enemy's country to retrieve a disaster which had lately befallen some of the British forces there. It was a perilous business ; and its fate would soon be decided. Georgie sent his love to his father and her. No word of Camiola. Poor Lady Letitia felt a thrill of relief at this. Perhaps if—if—if he survived he would forget his unhappy love.

She handed the telegram to Mr. Lisle.

“He will be killed,” she said, with blanched face.

Mr. Lisle's lips trembled.

“Our boy is in the hands of God,” was all

he said ; " like the sons of other fathers and mothers, Letitia."

" It is a wicked war," she said from between her clenched teeth, not knowing anything about the matter, but glad to be able to denounce something.

That same morning Mrs. Pollen and Camiola were at breakfast in Dover Street. Mrs. Pollen had been thinking and talking of going abroad somewhere and taking Camiola with her ; but the project was put off from day to day. Camiola was reluctant to go anywhere away from London just at present, and Mrs. Pollen was not particularly anxious to change her ground now.

" People are fond of saying," she complacently observed, " that it is better to be half an hour too early for a train than half a minute too late. I don't think so, Camiola ; I much prefer to be half a minute too late."

" But then you lose the train and you can't go !"

" Exactly, dear. Just think what a relief that is ! I wish I had lost most of the trains

I ever succeeded in catching, and then I couldn't have gone to the places."

Mrs. Pollen took up the newspaper and began reading it. Now it is a rather remarkable fact that although Mrs. Pollen had such a gift of getting at other people's feelings, and could play a part with such skill and success when she made up her mind for it, she was not very good at concealing her own sudden emotions. Her deep dark eyes had too much expression in them not to betray their owner when the owner was off her guard. Camiola saw at once that there was some news in the paper which Mrs. Pollen did not wish her to see.

"There is something in the paper—about Georgie! Oh, please let me see."

"It says nothing about Georgie," Mrs. Pollen answered, "and there has been no fighting; it only talks of military preparations that you wouldn't understand any more than I do. I hate all that jargon about zerebas and Mudirs and stuff. Can't they write plain English? There is some talk of the cholera along the Riviera again, I see. It is just as

well we didn't go anywhere in that direction just yet, Camiola."

"Please let me see the paper," Camiola pleaded. "I know there is something in it that I ought to see. Don't mind about me, Mrs. Pollen. I shan't make a fool of myself; I can stand bad news."

"Well, I don't know that this is to be considered bad news as yet anyhow; it is only a movement; and I have known so many soldiers come back all right out of the most terrible wars, that I have rather got into the way of thinking the battle-field about the safest place one's friends could be in. There, dear, read for yourself, and see if you can understand it."

Camiola took the paper and read the telegraphic despatch with enforced composure. She did not like the idea of being regarded as a more or less hysterical girl.

"Oh yes," she said quietly; "I understand it all quite well. Georgie's battalion is ordered on an expedition which is very dangerous, and we shall know what happens very soon. While we are talking here the thing may

be decided, and the worst may have come. We can only sit and wait until the news comes."

"Camiola," Mrs. Pollen said tenderly, "that is indeed the cruel doom of women in the world ; we have to sit and wait while the fate of those we love is being decided far away. If you could only know how many times I have sat and waited in the same way ! And for all that I said just now, my dear, one never gets used to it ; oh no, never." Her mind went back to many such trials. She had been about the world much, and had waited with sickening heart for the news from many a battle-field.

"There is only one thing I can do," Camiola said, "and I must do that at once. I must go to Lady Letitia."

"I don't think I would do that," Mrs. Pollen said gravely.

"Oh, why not ? Surely my place is with her—while this is going on. We must know all in a day or two. I ought to be with her and try to keep her up ; she will be glad of my company. I was very near being his

wife ; I was very fond of him ; I feel as if I were her daughter."

"Well, my dear, I shan't put myself in the way if you feel that you ought to be with her. Only I still think you ought not to go unless you are prepared—unless you have made up your mind——" Mrs. Pollen stopped short.

"Made up my mind to do what?"

"To marry Georgie—if he comes back all right."

"Dear Mrs. Pollen, I *have* made up my mind ; of course I have ; I will tell Lady Letitia so. You know I offered to marry him up to the very last, if he liked."

"There is nothing more to be said," Mrs. Pollen grimly observed, and added, "He'll come back again all right, you'll see."

"You say that," Camiola interposed reproachfully, "almost as if you would be sorry if he did come back."

Mrs. Pollen was silent. She did not particularly care about Georgie Lisle, it must be owned, and she did care about Romont, and it seemed to her that a man more or a man

less killed in battle was not a matter of great concern, except to the immediate relatives and friends of each fallen hero.

“ You are angry with me,” Camiola pleaded, trying another tack.

“ Well, yes, I think I am. You know I always detested the thought of your marrying Georgie Lisle. I am thinking about your happiness, Camiola, and the happiness of some one else who loves you, and who is worth forty battalions of Georgie Lises ; and, good gracious, what an army that would be ! But I dare say my anger will have quite passed away long before you get to Lady Letitia ; and, mind, I must have you back here again as soon as you hear that Georgie is all right, and has killed a hundred and ninety-five Arabs with his own hand—including six false prophets, each giving himself out to be the real Mahdi. Well, when that news comes I want you back again ; I am not going to give you up altogether to Lady Letitia any more. You must have the carriage. Would you like my Albanian, Joseph, to go as your escort ? ”

Camiola knew that her cheek was growing red at the suggestion.

"Dear Mrs. Pollen," she said in appealing remonstrance, "if I didn't know that you had the kindest heart of any woman in the world, I should think you were making sport with my trouble and poor Lady Letitia's."

"I take it all back, dear," Mrs. Pollen said, and she kissed the girl, "but you provoked me." So the two friends parted, each well understanding the other. Camiola knew only too well why Mrs. Pollen was provoked by her; and Mrs. Pollen was only fighting the cause of Camiola's heart and of her love against Camiola herself.

An hour after this Camiola ran into Lady Letitia's arms, and the two women were in tears together, tears of sympathy and affection and anxious sad foreboding.

"You see, I have come back to you after all," Camiola said, with needless exposition of an obvious fact.

"You heard of our trouble, and you came," Lady Letitia said.

"Your trouble is my trouble, dearest Lady

Letitia ; if you are to be left without a son, I am to be left without a husband."

Lady Letitia pressed her hand with a tender emphasis. She knew what Camiola meant, and she was grateful.

"But he will come back all right ; I know he will come back," Camiola insisted cheerily, in manner at least. "He will be spared to us both."

"If he could see us now," Lady Letitia murmured, "it would make him happy. It would make him wish to live." She began to shed tears once again at the thought that he did not know, and not knowing did not wish to live, and would therefore seek out his death ; which if he did know he might even still avoid.

"He will do his duty like a brave man," Camiola said.

"Yes, I suppose so." Lady Letitia shuddered at the thought of what it meant to do one's duty in such a place and in such a struggle. Certainly she would not have wished Georgie to shirk his duty. But how happy were the mothers who had sons in whose way such duty did not come!

Mr. Lisle came in and welcomed Camiola cordially, but did not make too much of her coming; took it as if it were quite natural that she should bring her visit to Mrs. Pollen to an end at a time when her nearer friends were in some trouble. Mr. Lisle did not make much of the trouble either. He had braced his mind up to bear it. Georgie was a soldier, and had to go to the battle-field when he was summoned there; and if he must lose his life, it was to be lost in the way of duty. Mr. Lisle risked his own life and the lives that were far dearer to him every day, as he visited some of the fever-dens and small-pox dens of Fitzurseham. They dined quietly, and as if nothing in particular were going on; and they talked of things in general. It was only when the two women were alone that they came back at once to their trouble, and talked of nothing else. Every moment Lady Letitia started and looked anxiously around her. She was on the watch for the sound of the bell at the gate, which might announce a telegram with news from the battle-field. The air was sur-

charged with electricity ; a growl of distant thunder was heard. Lady Letitia gave a little shriek and jumped up.

“I thought for the moment it was the sound of cannon,” she said, with a faint smile. And her husband and Camiola knew only too well what she was thinking of. No telegram came that night ; and the papers next morning brought no news. It was a relief that no news had come. No news was, truly, in that state of things, good news ; and yet there was something terrible in the thought that the whole livelong day had to be gone through again in the shuddering expectation of something to come which might come at any moment, and which, when it did come, might prove to be the very worst.

“I think it was better in the days when there were no telegrams,” Lady Letitia sadly said ; “then one was not always expecting.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

“ PALLAS TE HOC VULNERE.”

WALTER did not succeed in getting out of his flirtation with Lady Pallas quite as easily as he had hoped. He made an effort to draw out of it ; and Lady Pallas saw it, and set it down to some remonstrance on Janette's part, and made up her mind to punish both Janette and him. Lady Pallas never in any case would let a man throw her over ; she would always do the throwing over herself. It was the fate of every man who got entangled in a flirtation with her to be thrown over ; this was the crowning triumph of Lady Pallas's game ; she enjoyed it most of all. She would let no man off until he had written her a letter containing a wild declaration of love ; and then if she wanted to get rid of him she

made his letter an excuse for dropping him altogether, and she got additional credit among her friends and acquaintances for her propriety and prudence. To her more intimate friends she explained that it was unsatisfactory to let a man off without having a written declaration of love from him; that was the trophy; that was his scalp. Lady Pallas had a large collection of such scalps at her belt, and she was not going to let Walter Fitzurse off until she had added his to her adornment.

So she drew him on; he was easily drawn on. Her social position added inestimable value to her charms in his eyes. He was proud and delighted to be seen with her; to be talked about with her. She drew him quite away from Janette, who passed lonely hours now, but as yet made no complaint; too much bewildered by the whole affair to understand whether she had any right to complain or not. At last there came to Lady Pallas the inevitable letter pouring out Walter's whole soul. It was very effusive and rhapsodical indeed; proclaimed a passion

of the wildest kind, declared that he had never known love before, spoke of Janette in words of pitying kindness as a devoted and loving young woman who was utterly incapable of appreciating a nature like his, and assured Lady Pallas that in her and her alone he found a soul respondent to his own, and so forth, and so forth. Lady Pallas had seen a good deal of that sort of thing before, and was hardly even amused by it now. But it was all she wanted of Walter ; and she went off in triumph and delight to call on Janette.

“So glad you are alone, Mrs. Fitzurse,” Lady Pallas said. “I have something rather particular to say to you. I know you are a thoughtful and sensible young woman and won’t mind. You must really keep that husband of yours in better order, my dear, and not let him go running all over the place making love to married ladies.”

Janette rose up indignant, with an angry light in her eyes, and a colour coming even into her pale cheeks. Lady Pallas went on composedly—

“He has been making love to me this time

—of course you saw, but you had too much sense to notice it, and I did not think it would be wise of me to seem to make too much of it—the best thing is to treat all that sort of stuff lightly as long as one can. I dare say you will come to think the same yourself before long; you will be persecuted with attentions, as people call them. But still there are bounds, you know; and your silly husband has been writing me such a letter! Why, if I told *my* husband about it there would be an awful row. But I didn't; what would be the use of making trouble? I thought the best thing I could do was to come to you and get you to scold your husband."

"Has my husband been making love to you, Lady Pallas?"

"My dear, you shall judge for yourself. Here is his letter, you can read it."

Lady Pallas handed her the letter. It was indeed in Walter's handwriting. Janette's eyes were dazed.

"I don't want to read it," she said coldly. "It was not meant for me to see."

"No, indeed ; that it certainly was not ; but you have a right to read it all the same. I make it my particular request that you should read it."

A faint glimmer of hope broke in upon Janette's betossed mind. "Perhaps it is not so bad as she says. Perhaps if I read it I shall think better of him." So she read it. Oh no, there was no mistake ; there was no thinking better of him. It was a love-letter—a love-letter full of passion and rapture. There was no use in halting now ; she read it all through ; even the words which disparaged and made little of herself and told Lady Pallas that he never had loved her. She felt herself growing old as she read the letter ; she was turning from a credulous child into a hard and cynical woman of the world.

"What do you want me to do, Lady Pallas ?"

"Just to keep this letter—you may have it—and show it to your naughty husband, and tell him he is never to make love to me any more on pain of having Lord Pallas told of it ; and tell him never to come to see me

again, for I shall not be at home to him any more. Good gracious ! to think of writing *me* a letter like that ! One would think I was a witch and had bewitched him ! That letter will be a great weapon in your hands, Mrs. Fitzurse ; you can make him do anything you like with that. I wish to goodness I had in my hands such a letter from my husband written to some woman ; I would make him sit up, I can tell you. But Lord Pallas doesn't care a straw for any woman but me ; I don't believe he was ever in love with any other woman in all his life."

"You are very happy," Janette said coldly.

"Happy ? Well, I don't know ; it is tiresome sometimes to have one's husband so very fond of one. Well, that's all I came to say, Mrs. Fitzurse. Don't take this too much to heart ; men are all very much the same sort of thing. I have had letters like that from the husbands of several dear friends of mine."

"Have you shown the letters to all these dear friends ?"

"That depends, you know ; where a man

can be easily frightened off I shouldn't think it necessary to appeal to his wife—or where he wasn't very bad, you know."

"Why have you favoured me?"

"Well, you seemed so trusting, and innocent, and unacquainted with the world and the ways of men, that I thought it only the act of friendship to open your eyes at once and show you how absurd it is for us women to trust to professions of love and all that, and to make ourselves unhappy about them, or care for them in the least——"

"I would rather have cared for my husband——"

"If one could, you know, if one could; but one can't after a while; one is sure to find out something; or else to be tired of one's husband; and it is better to find out something. It will do you good, I know, to be put on your guard early in your married life. You will get on ever so much the better by knowing the worst at once. I have given you a splendid weapon to use against your husband for the future. You ought to be able to keep him in good control for the rest of

his natural life. Such a shame ; and with so pretty and charming a young creature for his wife ! Why, you dear little child, you are scarcely half my age, and such a sweet-looking little saint-like face ! Compare me !—well, I don't know what men are like. The sooner we learn to despise them the better ; to despise them and to govern them. Good-bye, dear Mrs. Fitzurse ; how is Lady Letitia ? I haven't seen her this long time ; she seems to stick always now in that dreadful place across the water."

Janette kept her composure bravely while her visitor remained. At last Lady Pallas went away, feeling very happy. She had had her triumph over Janette, and had at the same time, she thought, behaved very generously and kindly to the little thing. Lady Pallas really thought it a good action to open the little wife's eyes at once, and of course it was a highly pleasurable good action to the doer, for it was a great gratification to Lady Pallas to be able to tell Janette that she had made Janette's husband wild with love for her. Lady Pallas always thought it good fun to

make young women's husbands fall in love with her. So she was doubly happy this time. She had the triumph over Janette, and she had also the consciousness of having done a good action. "Poor little woman," she thought complacently, "I dare say she will cry her eyes out over this."

Lady Pallas had to make one or two other calls before she went home. One was at the house of a great lady, a friend of hers, who happened to have just then some benevolent project for the reclamation and shelter of fallen women. She invited Lady Pallas to help her, but Lady Pallas would not do anything of the kind.

"They don't deserve to be helped, these creatures," she said energetically. "Whose fault is it but their own if they fall? Let them remain fallen: I don't think proper women ought to have anything to do with them or to countenance them in any way. It seems to me positively indecent to have anything to do with such wretches."

"Even to reclaim them?" her astonished friend asked.

"Oh, you can't reclaim such creatures—it wouldn't be any use reclaiming them. They are a disgrace to our sex, and the more they are cut off from us altogether the better. It is only encouraging vice—putting a premium upon vice—to have anything to do with them. I have no pity for women who go wrong, and I am sure if you think it over you will agree with me in the end."

Meanwhile, how did Janette feel now that it was all over—the love, the dream of happiness? What Janette felt was not the ordinary pang of jealousy that a wife feels and often contrives to get over. Many a man has done as bad a thing as Walter had done, whose wife can yet find it in her heart to forgive him, and to live on with him happily enough. Many a man has done far worse, and yet been forgiven and taken once more into confidence and affection by a faithful wife. But what this meant to Janette was the wreck of the whole structure of her life. The man she was married to had turned out to be a totally different being from the man she believed herself to be marrying. A

woman who believes she is marrying a hero, and finds out that she has married a swindler ; a woman who, believing herself to be the wife of an Alceste, discovers when too late that she is the wife of a Tartuffe, could not be more utterly deceived than was poor Janette Fitzurse. The man she loved was not in existence, and had never been in existence. She was bound by her marriage bond to a creature whom she despised. She had hardly a thought about Lady Pallas; she had not time to be angry with her. It was not a question of Lady Pallas ; what did it matter about her ? Janette only knew that Walter was a false, deceitful, worthless creature—that was the one terrible fact which darkened the sunlight of her life and blighted her youth without hope. He was gone, and there was an end. "I will go to my father and mother," she said. She would not remain another night under the same roof with her husband, although it was the roof of a house which, too, was her father's. She wrote a few lines, with which she enclosed Walter's own letter written to Lady Pallas ; told him that she was

going to her father and mother, and wished not to see him any more. She left it addressed to him on the desk where he used to write, whenever the spell of literary composition was on him. She stopped for a moment before laying the letter on the desk, and she thought of the fervour of admiration, pride, and hope with which she used to watch him as he wrote there, and the conviction she had that he would one day astonish the world by his genius and by its devotion to some great purpose for the improvement of the lot of men and women. Now all that was over. She would never watch him writing any more; never more have faith in him or hope for him. Little by little her faith had lately been shaken; but she did not dream of seeing it thus shattered at one stroke. She had to own to herself in a reluctant way that the revelation, after all, was not so much of a surprise to her. It was rather like the terrible confirmation of some surmise which one cannot help making, and yet would fain condemn one's self for allowing it a moment's residence in the breast. It was very hard,

very hard ; but there was no help for it. The other day she was a young and happy bride ; now she was in the truest and most cruel sense a widow. What was an ordinary widowhood compared with hers ? The woman whose husband is dead may lament him and love him and keep his memory in reverence to the end of her life. He may abide in her bosom as warmly as a living heart ; he may be a perpetual light and guidance to her. But Janette was for ever and altogether widowed. For her there was no memory to cherish ; she could set up no shrine in her heart at which to do loving worship.

She was thinking of all this in a vague sort of way, rather as if it were another's trouble and not hers. Lady Pallas was mistaken about Janette crying her eyes out ; at least, the time for crying had not come yet. She put the letter with its fatal enclosure on her husband's desk, and then she prepared to go. For a moment she had a thought of going to Mrs. Pollen's to see Camiola. She did not yet know that Camiola had gone to Fitzurseham ; but she put aside the idea.

She was not fit to see any one but her mother just then, she said to herself. Oh, how kind and good her mother had always been, and how right she was when she distrusted *him* ! Janette longed to make her the poor, sad reparation of acknowledging to her how right she had been. It was while Janette was in the carriage driving to Fitzurseham that a strange, quite new physical sensation startled her and at first made her think that she was going to die, and she felt relieved at the thought ; and then in an instant the truth came borne in upon her, and she knew that that sensation spoke not of death but of life ; and then she became hysterical indeed ; and if Lady Pallas could have seen her she would have been immensely gratified, no doubt, for Janette seemed as if she were really bent on crying her eyes out. But Lady Pallas would not have known the cause, or at least all the cause, of those tears.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MRS. POLLEN CONSENTS TO MEDIATE.

THE day had been one of disappointment for Walter, so far. He had tried to get on with some literary work, but had found that he was not in the vein. He went to the club for luncheon, and heard one or two men there talking of Lady Pallas, and they spoke of her as carrying on a flirtation just now with somebody whom Walter did not even know by name; and they talked of this before him, and even to him, as if it were something in which he could not be supposed to have any keen interest. It was plain, then, that people did not talk of him and Lady Pallas together; and much of his labour of love-making was therefore thrown away. Moreover, the two men agreed that

it was of no use any one starting a flirtation with Lady Pallas ; she would only make a fool of him and throw him over.

This was annoying. He hurried back to his chambers expecting Janette ; for, notwithstanding the letter to Lady Pallas, or perhaps because of it, he had for the last day or two been trying hard to get back to the old affectionate terms with his wife, and he had asked her particularly to call for him this day, and he understood that she promised. But she did not come. He waited until six o'clock and she did not come ; she was clearly not coming. He felt that he had a rightful ground of complaint against her, and that he was well entitled to go and call on Lady Pallas. That lady was at home to her friends every afternoon in the season from six o'clock until seven. He called, and was told that Lady Pallas was not at home. He felt sure that she was at home ; and that the *consigne* merely meant not at home to him. He lingered in the street for a while and saw several persons, men and women, knock at Lady Pallas's door and gain ready admit-

tance. He was excluded, then—that was clear. Still, he was not altogether disconcerted by that. It might be a necessary sacrifice to propriety because of his letter. Lady Pallas might not like him to believe that she received such letters wholly without rebuke. He turned from the street and walked home, smoothing his brow as best he could, in order to meet Janette with looks of becoming affection.

He entered the room where he usually wrote. It was growing dusk already. He saw a letter lying on his desk; it was in Janette's handwriting. This, no doubt, would be the explanation why she had not come to the chambers for him. He took it to the window and opened it. A paper enclosed in the letter dropped out. He picked it up, and naturally looked first to see what it was. The sight almost failed his eyes when he saw that it was his own letter to Lady Pallas come back to him through the medium of his wife. Then he read Janette's short, decisive letter. Lady Pallas had betrayed him, had given his letter to his wife. Janette

had left him ; it was all over. Almost the first thought that came into his mind was that he could not stay any longer in that house. It was the house of Janette's father ; she had left him, and he would be turned out. He would be cut adrift ; no helping hand would be stretched to him any more ; he might as well go back to Fitzurseham at once.

What was to be done ? Should he endeavour to see Janette and try to talk her over, or make a full confession, abase himself in the dust before her, and beg for pity and pardon ? Something told him that Janette would prove relentless ; at least that, having found herself deceived in him as well as by him, she could never care for him again, and would not go through the farce of living with him as if she loved him. Besides, her family all hated him, had hated him from the first—they would do all they could to put her against him. Still, something must be done ; he could not give in without making some effort to put things straight. He felt utterly humiliated ; Lady Pallas had

acted a shameful part with him, he thought ; she had drawn him on only to make a mockery of him. Was anything like that ever heard of before in decent society—to betray a man's confidence to a man's own wife? Walter felt that the world was becoming hideously depraved ; that English society was going down straight to the lowest deeps of demoralization. One little scrap of comfort he had : Janette had not kept the letter, as she might have done. It was in his possession once again, and he would take good care that it could never be evidence against him. It would still be open to him to insist that it did not bear all the meaning Lady Pallas and Janette had put upon it. He could argue that it was merely an unmeaning piece of high-flown poetic compliment such as men are constantly offering to women, especially literary aspirants to their gracious patronesses, and meaning no harm thereby. The fact that he had destroyed the letter might create suspicion ; but it was much easier to deal with suspicion than with certainty. If Janette had kept

the letter, and merely told him that she had it in her keeping to produce against him, then indeed his case would be bad; but as matters were, there was a good deal to be glad of; the condition of things was not absolutely hopeless.

It suddenly occurred to him that it would be well to see Mrs. Pollen at once, and endeavour to enlist her intervention on his behalf, and perhaps that of Camiola. Mrs. Pollen was a sort of woman with whom a good deal could be done by any one who threw himself frankly on her protection, and concealed nothing. An instinct told him that he had better not destroy his unlucky letter until he had seen Mrs. Pollen. If she had reason to believe that he had destroyed it purposely, in order to get rid of the worst evidence against him, it would be of no use his trying to bring her to his side. Besides, he did not suppose she was the sort of woman to make too much fuss about a married man's attempt at flirtation with a professional flirt, as he now believed Lady Pallas to be. No, he would be entirely

candid with Mrs. Pollen; she should know everything. There would be still time to see her before dinner.

He hurried round to Mrs. Pollen's hotel. She had just come in, he was told. He begged to see her for a few minutes; she sent out to say that she would see him. She was alone in a room faintly lighted, the windows closed against autumnal dusk; a fire was burning.

"Well," she said sharply, "I am glad to see you—I am glad to see any one to-day." This was not a flattering way of putting things, but Walter somehow did not ever expect now to find Mrs. Pollen very gracious to him. "I have been lonely, and thinking—two things which don't agree with me. I am in a humour to welcome any companionship. Miss Sabine has gone back to Lady Letitia's—but of course you know that?"

"No, I haven't heard. What has she gone for?"

"Well, that stupid boy, that love-lorn brother-in-law of yours, has been ordered on some expedition, or something, and of course

Lady Letitia has made up her mind that he must be killed, that the whole forces of the Mahdi have set their hearts on removing so dangerous an enemy from their path ; and Camiola goes to Fitzurseham to help Lady Letitia in defending Georgie, who is only a few thousand miles off. So I must be left alone." She shrugged her shoulders and settled herself in her chair with an air of determined resignation. Walter did not appear actually convulsed by the news of Georgie's danger.

"You don't seem to take it to heart much?" Mrs. Pollen said, looking sharply at him.

"I have trouble of my own," he answered gloomily. "I have come to you for advice and help."

"Indeed? I thought you must have come for something."

"You have made us all accustomed to come to you when we are in any trouble."

"How very nice. Well, what's up?" Where is Janette? Is she in the trouble as well as you?"

"She is in trouble; but not as bad as

mine. She had done no wrong; she has nothing to reproach herself with."

"And you have? Well, that is easy to understand. Indeed, I have been hearing bad news of you. I will speak to you about it afterwards; now I want to hear your story."

"I have just been home," he said in deep tragic tone, "and I find Janette gone."

"Gone out, I suppose you mean. Well?"

"I don't mean gone out; Janette has left me."

Mrs. Pollen now wheeled her chair suddenly round and looked at him in amazement. "Janette has left you—left you for ever?"

"She says so. Here is her letter; she has left this for me. Do please read it, Mrs. Pollen."

"Draw over that little table with the lamp nearer to me. Thanks, that will do." She took the letter and read it over; then began and read it through a second time.

"What is the letter Janette speaks of? Have you got it? Am I to see that too?"

"You are."—"How lucky," he thought,

“that I did not destroy it at once!”—“Take it, Mrs. Pollen; it is an insane letter of mine to Lady Pallas. Lady Pallas must have handed it to my wife.”

Mrs. Pollen took the letter and read it; not so carefully, however, as she had read that of Janette. “I see,” she said; “regular sort of thing. What a fool you are! I must say I think it was rather unfair of Lady Pallas to give such a letter to a man’s wife. You deserve anything; but it was cruel to Janette. I saw this some time back that Lady Pallas was fooling you to the top of your bent; and you know I have given you a broad hint or two on that matter, which of course you didn’t take——”

“I know you are always kind.”

“It wasn’t on your account,” she replied sharply; “nor on *her* account, but on Janette’s; I didn’t want to have Janette made ridiculous and an object of sympathy in the minds of stupid gossiping people. Everybody tells me that Lady Pallas only gets up flirtations for the sake of making fools of men, and throwing them over, and

that she wouldn't risk her place in society for one second for all the men that ever made fools of themselves, or that nature had made fools of already. Fancy a silly green young donkey from Fitzurseham, like you—in your first season of London society—getting into a flirtation with Lady Pallas and writing a love-letter to her! If I were Janette I would only laugh in your face, and keep the letter to be a standing source of derision. My suburban Lovelace, to be sure; my Don Juan of the slums!”

“I am very poor,” he said crimsoning with anger; my family has been brought low——”

“Your family—stuff! Brought low? When were they high? Your family was my late husband's family; I have found out that. It is the only reason why I took any interest in you—I mean apart from my liking for your wife, to whom you have behaved so prettily. If you really did come out of the house of the Fitzurses I should never have cared one straw what became of you. Your father was a cousin of my husband, and of course it

was no fault of yours if he brought you up in the absurd idea that you were a member of a great house. Well, you have shown some title to be accounted one of its members, for I am sure you have been worthless enough for the best of them; and if you have not been quite as much of a Don Juan, that was by no merit of your own; you would have been if you could. Your wife, then, has found you out and gone back to her father and mother? From her point of view she was quite right, although I shouldn't have thought you worth making such a work about."

"She does not feel so to me," he said, abjectly deprecating Mrs. Pollen's scorn. "She thinks I am at least worthy of her anger."

"Yes; I said so. *I* shouldn't. If I were she I would just go on as if nothing had happened; I wouldn't trouble my people about such a trumpery matter, or give anybody a chance of talking about me. But *she* couldn't take that free-and-easy, woman-of-the-world view of things, and of course she is wounded to the heart. Good heavens,

it almost makes one wild to think of a woman like her being wounded to the heart by anything that a creature like you could do! Why must women have hearts?"

"You have a heart," he pleaded, "but you have closed it against me. I am down and you only trample on me."

"I find you trampling on her," Mrs. Pollen said vehemently, "and I can't help trampling on you. Very well; I'll not trample any more. What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to go to Janette; to go to Lady Letitia; to speak for me; to say anything you like; to make the most complete acknowledgment of my folly, and to promise for the future. If you could only see Janette before she had told anything to Lady Letitia——"

"Oh, I should think that would be out of the question. Very well; I don't know whether I am doing right, but I will go and try to persuade Janette to forgive you this time. I don't know that she will; I fancy her very truthfulness, her very purity, will

make her as hard as marble—the purest marble is the hardest, don't they say? She will not see how you and she could ever be the same to each other again. But you have thrown yourself on me, and I will do my best.”

“Can I ever show my gratitude?” He took her hand and tried to put it to his lips.

“Drop that sort of thing; it is thrown away on me. I shouldn't like to have my hand touched by your lips even though I had gloves on. I don't want any gratitude; I am doing all that I can do for Janette, and not for you. Now about this letter; it had better be destroyed, I think. No good can come of keeping it.”

This was of course his own idea, but he was glad that the suggestion came from her. He put the letter into the fire and watched it burning away into black tinder and then crumbling into ashes.

“Like that,” Mrs. Pollen said, “your hopes and your life will blacken and crumble and turn into ashes if you are not truly sorry for

what you have done, and determined to make atonement."

She stood up before him on the hearth, pointing to the little heap of ashes, black and feathery as the torn plumage of a raven, which now alone remained of his unlucky letter. There was something of her Eastern origin in the attitude and the manner, and the prophecy too, perhaps.

"Let it be so," Fitzurse said, becoming dramatic or melodramatic also. "Such a fate would be well deserved."

He was about to go.

"One word," she said. "I have had Mrs. Lammas here to-day—Vinnie's mother."

"Yes?" He looked embarrassed.

"She tells me that you have been seeing her daughter lately. Is that true? She complains of it."

"We met by the merest accident, and only exchanged half a dozen words. I didn't seek her. I don't mean to."

"No? I am glad. Let her alone, mind. I'll stand no nonsense about that, remember. I know a good deal about you that we have

not talked of, and I told you before that the amnesty was only conditional. My Albanian, Joseph, is a man of wonderful memory."

"Just one thing," he said beseechingly. He had all through the interview acted on what he conceived to be his best policy with her—that of utter submission. "I want to ask you one favour. I want to ask you not to tell Romont about this—about this quarrel with Janette, I mean. Don't tell him *that*. I don't want him to think too hardly of me."

"He knows a good deal about you already," Mrs. Pollen said in a slow and significant way. "He knows more than he told me, I fancy. But I have ways of finding out things."

"I know that Joseph told you everything," Fitzurse said despondently; "I am in your power altogether. I trust myself fearlessly to you; you will not be sorry for giving me this last chance. But I shouldn't like Romont to know about the quarrel with Janette and the cause; don't tell him that."

"No; I'll not tell him. I like you none the worse for asking me. I am glad that

you are ashamed of what you have done, and that you would wish him not to think too badly of you. Well, he shall never know anything about it so far as I am concerned. Now we haven't any more to say, have we?"

"When shall I see you again? When shall I know what has been your success?"

"I shall go at once. You had better come with me; you can hang around somewhere; we'll arrange that. If I am successful you can be sent for. If not——"

"If not I think the bottom of the Thames would be about my best place."

"There's something to be said for that view of matters," was Mrs. Pollen's composed reply. "But you'll never do *that*; you'll find something to live for where many a better and wiser man might show himself less of a practical philosopher. Well, let us have the carriage and go."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

JANETTE AT HOME AGAIN.

A MELANCHOLY day was drawing to a close with Lady Letitia and Camiola. They had been watching every moment for some news of Georgie. Nowhere could be found two more kindly-hearted and unselfish women; but it is much to be feared that they were concerned almost altogether about the fate of Georgie Lisle, and had little thought to spare for the hundreds of other Georgies who were in like danger. They were watching with eyes and ears as keenly set as though they could hear the firing of the English guns far away along the Nile. Truly there is something in what Lady Letitia had said about the additional anxiety and agony that the telegram brings us. In other days the anxious

mother would have known that only a mail could bring a letter ; and that many days must pass over her head without any possibility of her hearing tale or tidings about her son. For these days at all events she would go about the business of her life as usual ; there would be nothing to watch for and wait for. But now any moment might bring its fateful message to Lady Letitia ; it was as if she were on the edge of the fight itself. The War Office was always very kind in letting her know anything worth knowing that concerned her son. Even if she did not have a message herself, the War Office might learn something and send the news on to her. Meanwhile any casual telegram from any friend in London, a message sent by wire from Mr. Lisle to say that he could not get back to dinner at the ordinary hour, would thrill her at its sight as if it were the story of her boy's death. The evening was grey and melancholy. The year had been one of those in which summer prolongs itself out of its season, and then suddenly vanishes and leaves England in the chill of advanced autumn, as

a tropical day changes into night without intervening twilight. The two women were standing on the lawn ; they had been walking up and down with their arms round each other's waists. Camiola's presence was the best comfort Lady Letitia could have ; it brought assurance for the future, if there was to be any future worth thinking of.

"It gets chilly ; shall we go in ?" Lady Letitia said.

"Look here, Lady Letitia, I have been thinking of something. This waiting here becomes unbearable, and you know we shall have to wait a long time somewhere. This dreadful campaign won't end for ever so long, perhaps. Why should we wait here ? Why not go out to Egypt—to Cairo, and wait there ? We should be near the spot then ; and I don't think the waiting would be half so bad."

In this thought Camiola had more meaning than she would have put into words. "If Georgie lives"—this was her idea—"I must marry him ; and I had better go out of this at once. I can bear it better when I

have left this place altogether and broken with the associations." Lady Letitia's eyes sparkled with pleasure at the thought of being so much nearer to her boy. But her rapture chilled off very soon.

"I don't think Mr. Lisle could go," she said.

"No, but we don't want him. You and I can go. Nothing will happen to us, and it will be such a relief to our minds. Let Janette come over and look after Mr. Lisle."

"I don't think Mr. Lisle would quite like my going. He would think I have duties here at home which I can do, and he would perhaps not see what good I could do out in Egypt, where of course I couldn't be very near Georgie. Besides, I don't really think we could afford the money this year."

"But I have money, and I never spend any of it ; you never let me ; you are such a screw about my money. Molière's Harpagon wasn't half as miserly about his own money as you are about mine. And I have never travelled ; everybody has seen the East except me. Now you must let me have my way for once. I'll do this."

"There may not be any occasion," Lady Letitia said, with foreboding tears coming into her eyes.

"There will be occasion," Camiola said, as decisively as if she were one of the destinies. "Georgie will come splendidly out of this and will be a hero, and we'll go out to Cairo. Leave me to persuade Mr. Lisle; I know I can do that. Why, here comes Janette, just in time to help us in our plot. Janette, Janette, come here."

A little figure dressed in black was coming across the lawn. It was Janette; she came to her mother and fell into her arms. Her pale face bore the cruel marks of tears. Lady Letitia thought they were shed because of Georgie's danger.

"I am so glad you came, my darling—to comfort me. It is terrible, isn't it? At any moment we may hear news."

"News of what, mamma?" Janette lifted her distraught face.

"My child! News of Georgie. He is in action; he may be killed at any moment; we may hear of his death."

"Dear Lady Letitia, don't frighten poor Janette in that way," Camiola interposed. "Why must Georgie be killed? Why shouldn't he come out of a battle as well as so many others? Janette, I am so glad you have come to help me in keeping Lady Letitia alive; she will have it that Georgie must be killed; she is already lamenting him as if all were over."

This was said in a soothing, petting sort of way as if Camiola were comforting a child. She felt very strong when compared to either of these short and slender women; she felt bound to take care of them both.

"I didn't come about that," Janette confessed; "I didn't know that Georgie was in such danger. I came for another reason; I have something to tell you." She opened her solemn eyes and gazed at Lady Letitia. In a moment Camiola knew that it was something about Walter Fitzurse. "I am going into the house," she said.

"You shall know all, Camiola, my sister," Janette said. "There's nothing to be kept from you; but I must tell mamma first."

She will tell you ; I could only tell it to mamma." Then when Camiola had gone—gone with sad foreboding heart—Janette said :—

"Mamma, you were right always and I was wrong. I have left Walter ; I don't want ever to see him again."

In the shock of this announcement even Georgie's danger was forgotten by Lady Letitia. Janette told her story simply and in a few words. Walter had made love to a married woman ; had written her a love-letter, in which he told her that he had never loved any one but her ; that he had never loved Janette at all. She had read the letter ; it was given to her to read by the woman to whom it was sent. She would never live with Walter again. It was curious to observe how Janette had grown with her trouble. She was not any longer a girl asking the advice of her mother. She was a determined woman telling her mother of her unalterable determination. Lady Letitia listened in horror to this revelation. Never before had she been brought into close personal

contact with such a fact in life. She had known many cases of worthless husbands among the poor of Fitzurseham ; and of course she knew very well that such things happened among the rich and the great as well. But they had never been brought home to her. All her personal experience of husbands and wives was just like that of her own household. Her father had been a most loving and true husband ; so had Mr. Lisle's father, although he didn't come of any great family ; so were her brothers. Much as she had disliked Janette's marriage she had never expected that such a thing as that would happen. The child was not long out of her honeymoon. She remained silent while Janette went on to tell her in broken sentences that she had begun lately to have the truth forced upon her that Walter was not the kind of man she had fondly believed him to be ; that his professions of high and noble purpose were all sham ; that when she found out about his love-affair she was not after all so much surprised as she might have been.

"My sweet child, this is too dreadful. I can't even think over it ; I can't take it all in just yet. But after all, my darling Janette—to leave your husband, you know—that is indeed a solemn step. I don't know ; I never heard of such a thing. To leave one's husband ; my dear, we must think before we make up our minds to that. We must consult your father."

"Mamma, my mind is all made up. I couldn't live with him any more ; how could I look up to him and respect him ? He would be always like that ; it would happen again and again."

"Let us go and speak to your father, dear. He has come in."

They went into the house and found the Rector in his study.

"St. George, my love, here is Janette ; our child has sad news to tell us."

The best and purest of men, at all events if he be in any way a man of the world, does not take a story of this kind exactly as a woman like Lady Letitia would take it. Mr. Lisle was filled with anger against Walter,

and sympathy with his daughter ; but he could not for the moment help wishing that the lady, whoever she was, to whom the love-letter was addressed, had shown it to some one else, and not to Walter Fitzurse's wife.

"The woman could hardly have had any good purpose in showing the letter to you, Janette."

"That isn't the point, St. George dear," Lady Letitia said in mild remonstrance.

"I have thought of that," Janette said. "I don't know what her purpose was ; but it doesn't matter to me. She is quite a proper woman ; that is quite clear."

"But I gather from you that she encouraged him," the Rector said. He was only trying to think what ought to be done.

"Yes, she encouraged him at first," Janette said. "I suppose she thought it meant nothing then."

There was a pause.

"Janette says she will never live with him again, St. George."

"Oh, well, that is a very serious thing ; a wife, you know ! I must go and see him at

once. We must at least hear what he has to say."

"It's of no use, dear, so far as I am concerned ; I will never live with him again. You will not turn me out of this house, I suppose ?"

"My dear child!" both the parents exclaimed, shocked at the bare idea of such a thing.

"Yes, you must go to him at once, St. George ; and you must try not to lose your self-control."

"I must try ; it will be hard work. I should like——" and Mr. Lisle clenched his fists in a manner which pretty clearly suggested what it was he would like to do.

The anxious conversation was interrupted by a servant who brought a card. It had some writing on it. It was from Mrs. Pollen, and bore the words, "Will you kindly see me? I want to speak to you so much. I have a strong reason ; I wouldn't come at such a time if I hadn't."

"Can there be more trouble for us?" Lady Letitia asked herself in dismay.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CAMIOLA'S PROJECT.

THAT was a trying interval for Mr. Lisle when he was left alone with Janette after Lady Letitia had gone, not very willingly, to speak to Mrs. Pollen. He was a man of deep feeling and warm emotion, but he was shy and reserved in manner, shy even with his daughter. He was very dependent for his manner on the manner of others to him. He would have liked to take Janette in his arms and kiss her a thousand times, and pour out words of fondness over her ; but he could not do it, somehow. She seemed constrained and cold, merely because she felt herself to some extent on her defence ; she knew she would have to resist a strong effort to get her to go back to her husband.

Therefore, much as she loved her father, she held aloof from him, occupying her defensive position, resolute to maintain it. She could not even see that there were two sides to the question ; she could not understand how it would be possible for her to go back to Walter after what had happened. Any demonstration of affection just now towards her father would have been taken, she assumed, as a sign of yielding, and she could not yield.

“ I don't deny that his conduct has been very bad,” the Rector said. It was characteristic of the simple magnanimity of his nature that he had not once reminded Janette of his early and constant distrust of her husband. “ But still, my dear child, he is your husband. I am one of those who have always doubted the authority of the civil law to dissolve any marriage ; and in your case there is no ground even for the intervention of the civil law. It would be a harsh measure to condemn a man utterly and for ever because of one fault, however grave and culpable. It may be your happiness—as I

think it would be your duty to make the effort at least—it may be your happiness to bring him to a better life and a higher principle. Then, you know, there is the giving of scandal, and people in a rather conspicuous position should especially avoid anything of the kind, in days like ours too; in days like ours, when so much that was once held sacred is questioned and put to trial; and I do think, Janette, as a clergyman and as—as your very loving father, dear—that you are called upon to make some sacrifice of your feelings here. I do indeed.”

The Rector's voice was giving way, and his spectacle-glasses, more moony than ever, were becoming dimmed with moisture. Janette felt unutterable affection for him, but she could not understand why he should want her to give way.

“But, my darling dear, you don't understand me; you don't enter into my feelings. He isn't the man I believed I was marrying; my soul and his could not be together; there is no truth in him, no honour, no principle; he cares for nothing, nothing, nothing but

vanity and himself. Oh, who could condemn a poor girl with some yearning for a higher life to the perpetual companionship of such a man? I should hate myself and despise myself if I could go back to him and settle down and pretend to love him and go on as if I thought he could love me! Listen, papa," and the child, opening her eyes their widest, prepared to make what she believed must be a crushing and final statement, "you can't believe one word he says on anything, on anything; oh, I know it, I know it, too well."

Mr. Lisle was relieved when his wife came back into the room. She looked at Janette while speaking to him.

"St. George, it is Mrs. Pollen. She has come from *him*. I had to speak to her; and she is a good woman. She has come from him—he has sent her to beg Janette's pardon and to explain all, and to promise better things for the future. What do you think?"

"You will see her, Janette?" Mr. Lisle said.

"Is this a sort of matter one discusses with

strangers? Why, I haven't even spoken of it to Camiola yet."

"Mrs. Pollen isn't quite a stranger in this, Janette," Lady Letitia said quickly. "She is a relative of his, the only living relative he has. I mean he is a relation of her late husband; and she is anxious about him, naturally. I thought it a little odd at first, her coming at such a time; intrusive rather it seemed; but it was really nothing of the kind. He begged her to come, and she has come on his behalf. You had better see her, Janette. She has a kind heart—one must like her."

"She is a very sensible woman too," the Rector added, heartily welcoming her intervention. "You had better see her."

"Oh yes; I'll see her if you like—if you think I ought to. But it won't do any good; she can't make things any different from what they are. I'll see her; yes."

"Will you see her here, Janette?"

"No, mamma dear; I'll go to her."

Janette left the room.

"This is a bad business, Letitia," the

Rector said. "I don't believe we shall be able to persuade her ; the child's heart seems to be steeled against him. I don't know what one ought to do ; he is a thorough cad, that is quite clear. It seems hard to have to sacrifice one's daughter to such a creature."

"She is already sacrificed to him, St. George ; she has sacrificed herself. The thing is done. The question is whether she had not best persevere now, and at least do her duty to her husband since she has made him her husband, whatever he may be."

"She detests him. Fancy a home in which the wife detests the husband ! It is shocking to think of !"

There was silence for a moment. Then Lady Letitia said in a very low tone—a sort of whisper—as if there was a chance of some stranger hearing what she was saying—

"Have you noticed anything in her look ? Have you guessed anything, St. George ?"

The Rector looked at her surprised. After a moment of perplexity, a ray of light seemed to come to him. "Oh, do you think so ?" he asked.*

"My dear, I am sure of it."

"Well, well—that does make a difference. Do you know that I believe by civil law he could after a short time take her child from her?"

"Yes, dear; I was thinking of that when I urged her to go back to him."

"Letitia, you are more thoughtful than I was; I was not thinking of that. But it alters everything. We must try to get her to go back."

It was to the credit of this good man that, here brought face to face with a calamity which to him was utterly unexpected, an undreamt-of incident in life for such a life as his, he wasted no word in mere repining or expression of bewilderment. It never could have occurred either to him or to his wife as one of the possibilities of life that the dearly loved daughter, whom they had brought up with such fond care, could marry in their despite a man whom they distrusted and disliked; and having married him should have to fly from him and his viciousness, and crave from them shelter and protection against the

husband she had chosen for herself. How could they have thought of anything like this? Death, the death of a loved child, every father and mother thinks of as a dread chance; sickness, disappointments of various kinds are within the horizon of every one's expectation; but the fate that had befallen Janette was one which had never been foreshadowed, even in pessimist conjecture, to the thoughts of her father and mother. Yet confronted suddenly by the cruel fact they were not shaken from the moorings of the principles which had guided them through life. They were equal to the trial; they wasted no time in idle complainings or futile expressions of wonder why things were so. Lady Letitia felt herself strengthened and made patient by the presence of her husband.

They talked for what seemed a long time over what ought to be done, or could be done. Presently Mrs. Pollen came in alone.

"I give it up," she said quietly.

"She will not see him?" Lady Letitia asked.

"We didn't even get to that. She will not hear of going back to him. Perhaps the child is right; I have almost come to think it. After all, what can there be worse than the cruel, degrading process that crushes all the nobleness out of one life by subjecting it to the debasing influence of another life which has no good in it? I can't believe that any law, human or divine, condemns a girl like Janette to live always with a man like that. The whole thing is a sad story, and of course one thinks at first it would be well to try to make the best of it and avoid scandal; but I really believe she is right. She couldn't do anything to make his nature any better. I know something of the way in which a woman's life, and nature, and soul may be dragged down by the constant association with ignoble ambitions and vulgar shams. I think she sees her way, and it is hardly the thing for me, anyhow, to try to turn her from it."

"Where is he?" the Rector asked.

"He? Oh, he's waiting outside somewhere on the chance of her seeing him. He

came with me. I thought there might be still a chance of making up matters."

"How if we were to let him see her, Letitia?" Mr. Lisle asked of his wife, not hopefully, but in the tone of one who feels bound to leave no stone unturned.

"I think it would be only right," Lady Letitia answered promptly. "Seeing him and hearing him plead his own cause might perhaps touch her. It must touch her if she has any love left for him."

"Of course," Mrs. Pollen said. "But there's the difficulty—I don't believe she has any love left for him. It seems to have gone out like a candle in a strong wind."

"One can light the candle again," the Rector said.

"Yes, but I don't believe you can make her love for him light up again. She is an odd girl, not a bit like any other woman I ever knew. Most of us, when we do love a man, we love him in spite of anything he may do—we are angry with ourselves and ashamed of ourselves, perhaps, but there the love is and we can't help it. But I do

believe this girl is incapable of loving any one who shows himself unworthy. I believe her heart and her moral nature go together, like light and heat. I am sure she is quite right, and that she is millions of miles above ordinary women, and above *me*. That's why I can't hope to change her resolution, and I don't believe I ought to try. But as to her seeing him, that's a different thing. If he can soften her, why, all right. Let's give him the chance, anyhow."

"Where is Janette?" the Rector asked.

"She is with Camiola, in her own room; the room that used to be hers." Lady Letitia replied, speaking the last words tearfully.

"Give Camiola the straight tip," Mrs. Pollen said, "and I'll go and find him; and when Janette is alone we'll send him in to talk to her. If that fails there's an end of the matter, and I for one shan't be very sorry."

"That's the thing to do," said Mr. Lisle.

Mrs. Pollen went in quest of Walter, and Lady Letitia arranged to have the word passed to Camiola in order that Camiola

might leave the coast clear at the right time, and give the husband a chance of making his peace with his wife. Much as the Lisles disliked and distrusted Walter, they yet ardently desired that he should succeed in winning the forgiveness and reconquering the affection of their daughter. To them the bond that holds together husband and wife was absolutely sacred. No man and woman could have held in stronger aversion conduct like that of which Walter Fitzurse had been guilty towards their daughter, whom they loved so fondly; but still, as they would both have put it, still he was her husband, still he might be reclaimed for better things, still it was her duty to forgive him, and try to win him to goodness. So they saw their way at this bewildering moment even through eyes which were dashed with tears.

Mrs. Pollen presently returned alone.

"I can't find him anywhere," she said. "He is not anywhere in the grounds. He told the coachman he would be back in a few minutes, but there is no sign of him. Isn't it like him? Is there any other man in the

world who would go mooning about at such a moment? Well, I firmly believe it is his last chance."

"Perhaps he has gone to Fitzurse House," the Rector suggested. "He didn't know, perhaps, that he was likely to be called in."

"Yes, we talked of that. He hasn't gone to Fitzurse House—at least, he hadn't up to a few minutes ago. I met Mr. Pilgrim and I have sent him on a hunt for our lost sheep—black sheep, I am afraid. Pilgrim may find him."

"Pilgrim doesn't know, I hope——" the Rector began hastily.

"Pilgrim doesn't know anything about this. Pilgrim never wants to know anything; he never asks questions, and he never tries to guess. He will range over the whole place until he finds him—if he is still in this region at all. Of course, he may have chucked up the sponge and gone back to town."

Lady Letitia had not the faintest notion of Mrs. Pollen's meaning when she talked of Walter's having chucked up the sponge. But she was not in a mood to ask any questions.

"Well, we can only wait," she said.

Camiola came in, looking inquiringly for Walter, and surprised not to see him. She had been put in possession of the project to give him a last chance. Before that Janette had told her all, and she had pleaded hard with Janette for forgiveness and reconciliation, and in vain. There was an awkward silence for a few moments, and Camiola could hear the beating of her own anxious heart. Then the Rector started some talk, and it gradually came to a disclosure of Camiola's project for a journey to Egypt. Mr. Lisle was inclined at first to shake his head, but he was drawn on to think that the idea had a good deal to recommend it. If Janette would not live with her husband any more, it would be a very good thing to take her away out of England for the present. The excitement of being somewhere within hail of her brother and the anxiety about him, the joy if he came back to Cairo all right, the emotion of watching each day's news, would lift her out of her own personal cares and sorrows anyhow, and so far would

be well for her. He would miss Lady Letitia—they had never before been separated for any time since their marriage; but that was a matter not to be thought of. Besides, it would probably be better to have all the women out of the way when it came to a final settlement with Janette's unfortunate husband. The trip would be a little expensive, but, under the circumstances, he did not care about that. After thinking the matter a little over, Mr. Lisle became positively enthusiastic about the project, and only wished it were possible for him to make one of the party. As was but natural with a man, Mr. Lisle, in all his anxiety about Georgie and his wish to be near him, felt also a yearning to gratify a desire long possessing him and still ungratified, the desire to see the Pyramids. Lady Letitia thought of nothing but getting nearer to her son.

CHAPTER XL.

MRS. POLLEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROJECT.

MRS. POLLEN kept for some time an unwonted and an ominous silence. This might have seemed singular to the others if it were not that two of them at least, Mr. Lisle and his wife, were too much absorbed in their own cares and desires to be very observant of the demeanour of anybody else. Camiola soon began to wonder why Mrs. Pollen took no part in the conversation. She was the only one in the company who knew anything about the East or about travelling. She had passed a great part of her life in travel, and yet she did not appear to have any suggestion to make just now. The truth of the matter was, that Mrs. Pollen had listened to all that was said with

much interest, and entirely approved of the project as she understood it. But it soon appeared that she did not rightly understand it at all. Her idea at first was that only Lady Letitia and Janette were to go out, and that Camiola was to remain with her. But when she found that the scheme included the going out of Camiola to be near Georgie Lisle, her eyebrows arched themselves with curious movement.

"Oh, and you are to go too, Camiola dear?"

"Yes, Mrs. Pollen, I am to go. The project is mine altogether; I am to personally conduct this party."

"How very nice! How very delightful! Such a charming project! Then you will be so near Georgie! If ever he should be sent up to Cairo with despatches from the front, you would see him?"

"Yes," Lady Letitia said, in a low soft voice; "that is one of our motives."

Camiola felt herself blushing, and said nothing. She knew that something was coming.

"Yes," Mrs. Pollen said, repeating Lady Letitia's words slowly ; "that is one of our motives. Exactly, to be sure. One of our motives, and a very natural motive ; one quite understands. I like the whole idea immensely. I only wish I were going too. You see, I might be of some service ; I know Egypt so well. I am much more familiar with Cairo than I am with Fitzurseham. Then I am a sort of Asiatic, Lady Letitia. Of course, I don't mean to say that I think Egypt is in Asia, although I believe a good many highly respectable women, brought up on the use of the globes and Mangnall's questions, have some idea of the kind."

"I suppose all Eastern places are much the same," Lady Letitia observed, apparently for the sake of saying something.

At this point in the conversation Mr. Lisle was sent for—somebody wanted to see him, and he saw everybody who asked for him. He left the room. Now Camiola knew Mrs. Pollen and her ways well enough to know that when she talked on as she had been doing she was only talking to gain time

while she was thinking something out. Camiola could easily anticipate the objection Mrs. Pollen would feel to her proposal to go out to Egypt while Georgie Lisle was there; and she felt certain that even at this moment Mrs. Pollen was setting herself to devise some scheme by which the plan might be frustrated. She sat in anxiety, knowing that something was coming, unable even to guess what it might be.

"None of you know Egypt at all?" Mrs. Pollen asked.

"Oh no; no. We don't any of us know a bit about it. I never travelled further than Naples," Lady Letitia said. "And I have been the greatest traveller of the three."

"It's so uncomfortable for women travelling alone," Mrs. Pollen said, meditatively. "And when you get off the regular tracks, positively dangerous now, I should think. I don't know what you would do when it came to the question of landing at Alexandria and getting all your things seen to, and giving *baksheesh* and all that. I fancy things are much worse now than they used to be,

and they used to be bad enough. I don't see it, really."

"Come, now," Camiola thought to herself, "if this is all we shan't have much difficulty. If Mrs. Pollen only thinks of frightening us out of our enterprise, she won't make much of that." Camiola was inclined to indulge in a quiet smile at the idea of such a way of defeating her scheme.

"We shan't mind in the least," she said. "I have a genius for getting through all manner of little difficulties. Nothing could happen to us. I never was shy, or nervous, or afraid of anything in my life. We can get a dragoman to come out to the steamer to meet us. I have read all about that sort of thing. Fancy a traveller like you, Mrs. Pollen, who has gone half over the world, alone thinking of such difficulties."

"My dear, I wasn't thinking of discouraging you at all."

"Thank you, I am so glad," Camiola said, feeling greatly relieved.

Her feeling of relief was premature.

"I was only thinking how to have all that

arranged for you," Mrs. Pollen said, fixing her dark eyes on Camiola with a look of audacious determination. "I will send a man with you who can take care of you and do everything for you. You know him, Camiola—my Albanian, my Joseph, my factotum?"

Camiola could hardly keep back a sudden exclamation. What could Mrs. Pollen mean? Was there really at hand an Albanian Joseph, a genuine Albanian; or what did this strange announcement imply or intend? Mrs. Pollen went on with the most cheery self-satisfaction, sending a look of saucy challenge and defiance every now and then at the bewildered Camiola.

"Yes; I am so glad; we have him here now. Joseph is just the man you want. He can take charge of everything, and do everything. He doesn't speak English, but that don't matter; you will be out of England soon enough, and he speaks lots of other languages."

"Does he know Egypt?" Lady Letitia asked.

"Egypt? Yes, I should think he did.

He knows the East like a book. He knows a lot of things, doesn't he, Camiola?"

"Oh, it wouldn't do at all," Camiola said hastily.

"Why not, dear?" Mrs. Pollen asked slowly and deliberately, with all the simple earnestness of one who pauses for a reply.

"Oh, I don't know," Camiola replied, full of impatience, anger, and confusion. Of course she could not speak out and tell Lady Letitia what she knew of Mrs. Pollen's Albanian Joseph. Mrs. Pollen had her at the most complete disadvantage, and to Camiola's amazement seemed very much to enjoy it.

"I think it would be delightful," Lady Letitia said. "Of course, if you could spare him to us, Mrs. Pollen."

"I would spare him with pleasure," Mrs. Pollen answered, "to you, and to Camiola. I am sure I can answer for him that he would be delighted to go."

Camiola could not stand this any longer. She got up, and looking about the tables for a moment or two as if she were in quest of

something she had just remembered, she went out of the room and left them.

"Camiola doesn't seem to like the idea," Mrs. Pollen said, with a manner of entire simplicity.

"I suppose she thinks we are giving you too much trouble, and so we are; but as you are so very kind, and really we are rather helpless travellers, I do think it would be a great advantage to have with us a courier of whom one knows something; I do think it is so kind of you. Fancy having a man with us who is actually your own regular servant—of course he would take more interest in us and look after us better than any courier hired in London or Paris could possibly be expected to do."

"I can answer for it that he will take the warmest interest in you," Mrs. Pollen declared.

"Mr. Lisle, I am sure, will be delighted to hear of this arrangement. I think he was a little uneasy at the idea of our starting off, poor unprotected females, for Egypt; and this will take a load off his mind."

Camiola made desperate efforts to get to

private speech with Mrs. Pollen. She wanted to remonstrate, to ask for an explanation, to get to know what Mrs. Pollen meant. The moment was hardly one for farce or practical joke. Mrs. Pollen's action was inexplicable. But Mrs. Pollen was not to be intercepted easily or drawn into a corner and pressed into explanation. Once only Camiola got a chance of saying in a tone of appeal that might well have pleaded for pity the three words, "How can you?"

"I can," was Mrs. Pollen's quiet answer, "and I will. If you go to Cairo, Joseph goes too."

Lady Letitia prevented any further conference. She had suddenly recollected something—

"How stupid of me!" she said. "I had quite forgotten; I don't believe you have dined, Mrs. Pollen. We dined rather early to-day; a sort of dinner. We were all rather put out. Do let us get you something?"

"No, thanks; it's very kind of you, but I couldn't. I only dine when I like; I am not tied to dinner, like a stupid man. I have to

go across to Fitzurse House ; I shall be there if any one wants me for another hour."

" May I go with you ? " Camiola said, eagerly.

" Only too glad of your company, my dear if you will."

As the two were getting into the carriage, Mrs. Pollen said in a low tone to Camiola—

" Not a word about that until we are alone at home."

She pressed Camiola's hand with reassuring warmth. So they talked of indifferent things during the short drive.

Meanwhile, where was Walter Fitzurse while these few who might still be called in some sense his friends were planning to give him a chance of winning back his wife's forgiveness and affection ?

Walter never liked having to wait for anything or anybody ; and this night he was more than unusually impatient. Night had fallen ; the stars came out. He was a dreamer who might under better auspices have had something of the poet in him ; he found his present situation interesting and romantic.

His own story stood out striking and poetic before his mind. He was on the verge, it would seem, of ruin, after having had a short but splendid success. He was like the monarch described by Burns, on whose head the crown had been for one hour. He had won his young and high-born wife only to deceive her and be cast off by her. All this was picturesque, and it became more so as the evening darkness grew and the stars came out. His sensuous vanity found a certain charm and consolation in the romantic conditions of his fall. Already, as has been said, weary of waiting, and not believing that either Janette or his emissary would give way very soon, a fancy took him to wander into the streets of Fitzurseham, where now in the darkness he would hardly be recognized, and try what sensations the sight of the old familiar places would call up in his mind. He turned from the rectory, leaving word with Mrs. Pollen's coachman that if he were wanted he would be back shortly ; and he walked slowly into the town.

As he walked on he was, as usual, mentally

acting a little play, with himself for the hero. He was no longer Walter Fitzurse, the husband of Lady Letitia Lisle's daughter, the relative and *protégé* of Mrs. Pollen, the student of law and letters, with chambers in the Temple and a home in the West End. He was the Walter Fitzurse who had just left the ancient foundation and was beginning life, or rather beginning to think how he should begin life. He was the lover of Vinnie Lammas. Dear little Vinnie! After all, might it not have been better with him if he had never given her up; never been tempted to throw her over? All the memories of his youth were with her. When he loved her, even the shadows were hopeful; a roseate future could be seen shining through them. Now they had settled into dun banks of gloom. Many a time about this same hour of the evening had he gone to Vinnie's house to see her. Full of the thought he turned his steps that way. He was now the old Walter Fitzurse—the old young Walter Fitzurse—going to see his sweetheart, Vinnie Lammas, after having had an hour or two of

shorthand under Christian Pilgrim's care. See, there before him, not far, is the row of houses, the Terrace as it is called, in which Vinnie lives. Many a night when he thus came to see her he found her standing at her door on the top of the high flight of steps waiting for his coming, knowing he would come. It soothed and gratified his humour thus to play at being the old Walter Fitzurse, to feed himself with memories. Yes, there is her house; there is light in the windows where there was always light then. He had almost an intention to open the little iron gate quietly and go up the steps just to carry out more fully the idea that the past had come back. He was thinking this over, wondering whether he could do it unheard and unseen. He was now at the gate and had his hand on the latch, uncertain, and, looking suddenly up, there he saw Vinnie standing at her door exactly as in the old time, just as if she had been waiting for her lover's coming.

CHAPTER XLI.

POOR PILGRIM !

VINNIE could hardly believe the evidence of her senses when she saw Walter standing at the gate. He had his hand upon the latch ; he was about to lift it ; he was then deliberately coming to look for her ! She stood for a moment uncertain what to do. Her first impulse was to go back into the house, and close the door against him ; but then her mother would probably think that something was going on ; might hear Walter's voice if he should call to her ; would get alarmed, and would think she had been encouraging her old lover. Half the mistakes women make in life, half the wrong things they do, come from a fear that somebody or other in authority, some father or mother, or husband,

will think they are making mistakes or doing wrong. So in the hope of avoiding the suspicion they justify it. This was exactly what poor Vinnie did now. She remained on the doorsteps after Fitzurse had seen her, after he evidently knew that she had seen him.

“Vinnie,” he said, in a low voice which she heard all too distinctly; “come down; I want to speak to you.”

Some of the old gentle authority of the lover was in the voice. Vinnie came down the steps and stood on a level with him; only the gate between them. She said probably the most indiscreet thing she could have said under the circumstances.

“Hush, pray; mamma might hear you.”

Then he knew he could make her listen to him as long as he thought fit. “I want to speak to you, Vinnie,” he said.

“Oh, why did you come here?” she asked imploringly. “I don’t want to see you or speak to you; we have nothing to do with each other any more. Do go away; some one might see you.”

There was genuine alarm in her voice and her words. Some one might see him? Who was the some one? Christian Pilgrim, no doubt—her new lover. *That* was what she feared.

“I am very unhappy, Vinnie,” Fitzurse went on to say.

“Oh, but how can I help you?” Vinnie pleaded. “It is no fault of mine; I can’t do anything to make you happy. Why should you not be happy? If you want to know who is unhappy—well——” She did not finish the sentence. Its incompleteness made it only the more expressive. “I must go,” she added hastily.

“Not yet; not just for a moment. Do you know that every one is against me? Do you know that I haven’t a friend in the world left? Do you know that my wife has left me?”

Vinnie could hardly suppress a little scream of surprise at this piece of news thus blurted out.

“Your wife has left you—Miss Lisle?” Vinnie in her eagerness called Janette by her

maiden name. What she meant to put to Walter was this: "Do you expect me to believe that the well-brought-up admirable daughter of the Rector has done anything that a wife ought not to do? I don't believe it."

"She has left me," he said; "I mean, she has gone back to her father's house, and will not live with me any more."

"Oh!" Vinnie gasped out, in mingled pity and wonder.

"Yes, she has gone back to her father; and she will not even see me; she hates me."

The girl's heart was melted with compassion for him, and with a strange egotistic sentiment, as if something had happened which gave her a right to console him and to listen to his confidences. She would not send him away now for her mother or any one.

"I am sorry," she said. And she was sorry, really sorry, even although conscious of this other feeling at her heart. He was in trouble, and she lamented for him; but still, still, there was something soothing in the thought that in his grief he had come to

her for consolation, and that she ought not to deny him.

"Won't you come in," she said timidly,—
"Walter?" A long time had passed, long at least for her, since she had called him by his name before. "Mamma would be so glad to see you; she was always very fond of you."

"No, I don't want to see her; I couldn't look her in the face. She would be glad to know that everything had gone wrong with me; she would think it served me right, and so it does."

"Oh, my goodness! you don't know mamma. She isn't like that, not a bit. She would be very sorry for you, as I am."

"Yes, I know you are; I came to see you—to tell you. I thought it would be a comfort to hear your voice. You are the only one on earth who cares for me—and to think how I have acted to you! Can you ever forgive me?"

"Don't talk of forgiving; don't think about all that any more. I don't blame you; and mamma doesn't blame you, I don't think, or

not much. I wish you would come in and see her. I don't like your standing out here, and people might see."

"There is some one you are thinking of, Vinnie; some one you don't want to see me here with you."

"No, there's nobody," the girl said bravely; "nobody now. I don't mind who sees me so far as I am concerned, now that I know you are in trouble and have come to talk to your old friends about it. If you were happy, and all right and that, it would be different; but when one is in trouble why shouldn't he come for sympathy to his old friends? We were very old friends of yours—Walter."

For the second time she called him by his name. He put his hand over the railing of the little gate and took her hand in it.

"I am so sorry for you," she said simply. "What was it for? Why did she—your wife—why did she quarrel with you? I always heard she was so good."

"She is very good; she is far too good for me. She thought she had reason to believe

that I didn't love her as much as I loved—well—some one else. She thought I kept a secret from her.”

Vinnie had withdrawn her hand long before this. He spoke with his eyes fixed on hers. She thoroughly misunderstood him. Her world was a very narrow one, and she could not help being egotistic. Besides, he had given her to understand that day in the old churchyard that he was still fond of her, Vinnie, and that he was sorry now he had not married her. She grew red and hot, her lips trembled, she cast her eyes down.

“Oh, Walter, I'm so sorry. But that was a mistake, such a dreadful mistake. You never cared for me really in that way at all. No, no, you never did, never! You thought you did at one time, and so did I; but I know since then that it wasn't true. Oh, if that was all, you can have no trouble in making it up with your wife. To think that she should believe that!”

Fitzurse saw the misapprehension into which Vinnie had fallen, and he did not

propose to help her out of it. On the contrary, it appeared to him highly satisfactory and fortunate. He had intended telling her some story about his wife having fallen into a groundless jealousy of him on account of some great and beautiful lady—he liked to be thought of, even by Vinnie, as exciting the admiration of beautiful ladies of high rank—and of assuring Vinnie that he was not to blame in the least, and obtaining thus her admiration and her sympathy. But the turn things took seemed quite as agreeable to his vanity.

“I shall say nothing,” he said mysteriously, gloomily; “it would not be right for me. A man cannot crush an old affection wholly out of his heart all in a moment. Well, I thought I would tell you, Vinnie; I should not like you to hear harsh things said of me, and to believe them. I only ask you not to do that. There are enemies who will try to injure me in every way; I only ask you not to believe all they say, not to think the worst of me. Think the best of me you can, Vinnie,—perhaps you may not see me again.

There; I have said all I wanted to say; I came to say that. Good night, Vinnie; good bye."

He had not come to say that, or to say anything; he had not come to see her at all; he had not had any expectation of seeing her. He came because it pleased and soothed him to play his little play of being Walter Fitzurse, the lover of Vinnie Lammas, all over again. But as there was a chance put in his way of starting another theatric little scene, with himself again for its hero, he welcomed the chance, and saw himself in the part in a moment, without any previous study or rehearsal.

"Good-bye," she murmured. "Oh, I shall be so distressed about you. How shall I know if anything happens for good? Won't you let me know somehow? May I speak to Mrs. Pollen?"

"No," he answered abruptly; "it is better not. But as you care to hear about me, Vinnie, you shall hear. I will take care of that."

He felt that he had now reached the proper dramatic moment for a parting. He

pressed her hand again over the gate, and went hurriedly away, as one who feels that he is bound to keep down his emotions, and fears that if he lingers he may not be able to keep them down. The girl looked after him through the gathering night. Oh, how deeply she felt compassion and commiseration for him! There was no trace of anger in her heart towards him; she never thought of blaming him for her disappointment and her blighted life; she was only sorry for him now that his wife had turned against him—and on her account. She did not believe that Walter loved her, Vinnie, or ever had really loved her—that had been made clear to her long ago. She was angry in her heart with the jealous wife who had misconceived him; she longed to go to her and tell her what she knew to be the truth, and get her to become reconciled to him again. Even as she stood and looked after him, Vinnie had some wild project of the kind coming up in her mind. Still, sure as she was that he did not love her, there was something sweet in the thought that he was in trouble about her, and that he

came to her for sympathy and for consolation. Gazing after him, she did not see that some one was coming up to the house from the other direction. In a moment she heard Christian Pilgrim's voice, and she turned round in utter confusion. A man must have been actually sightless who did not see the distress and alarm painted on her face and staring out of her eyes as she turned and looked at him.

"What are you doing there, Vinnie? Who has been with you? Who has just been leaving you?"

"Mr. Pilgrim, what questions you do ask! I have been standing here at the door for some time. I often do."

"Something has happened, or you wouldn't look like that."

"Nothing has happened; nothing that concerns anybody."

"Who has been with you?"

"I wish you wouldn't ask questions," she answered angrily. "I don't want to be catechised. I am not a child at a Sunday school, Mr. Pilgrim. Will you come in?"

"Who is inside?"

"Mamma only."

"Has nobody been with you?"

"Nobody," Vinnie chose to construe his question as meaning "Has nobody been in the house with your mother and you;" and therefore thought herself free to give it a decided negative.

Pilgrim felt very doubtful. He did not like to admit for a moment the idea that the girl was telling him an untruth; and yet it was certain that she was distressed and alarmed about something; and that she was keeping back something from him. He felt almost satisfied that it was from her gate he had seen somebody going quickly away as he was coming up. He shook his head sorrowfully, and did not pursue the inquiry. What would be the use? he thought; why drive her into telling lies? He supposed that women were all like that; had always some little secret which they kept to themselves. Up to this moment he had not had the least suspicion that it might have been Walter Fitzurse whom he had seen leaving

her. If he was admitting any suspicion of a definite form, it was that Vinnie had found some new admirer, and had perhaps been entering on a little flirtation with him. He always expected that something of the kind would happen; he had been wondering every day when it would happen. Ruefully he had to own to himself that the girl was twining herself round his heart without effort or consciousness of her own; that she was every day growing more and more necessary to his existence. It was beginning to be borne in upon him that some day he would have to ask her to marry him. He would have done so before this but that he thought there was still too keen a memory of Walter in her heart, and that he ought to give her a longer season of widowhood, as it might well be called in her case.

"I can't go in, Vinnie," he said, with a softer manner; "I have to go back to the rectory. Mrs. Pollen sent me out to look for—for a man she wants to see; and he is in Fitzurseham somewhere, but I can't find him."

"Has Mrs. Pollen come back here—to-night?" Vinnie asked in surprise. "I suppose she will want me? Hadn't I better go?"

"Well, perhaps you might as well come over and see her; it is likely she may want you, although she didn't say so."

"She wouldn't say it," said Vinnie, "not at this hour; she is so kind and considerate, and never wants to give any trouble. I'll go at once. Shan't I go with you, if you are going back?"

"Yes; you had better come with me. Tell your mother. I'll wait here for you."

"Tell me first," she said, "has anything happened? Mamma will like to know."

"There's trouble at the rectory," Pilgrim answered slowly. "It's no use making a secret of it, Vinnie; you will come to know it soon enough, and every one else too. There's a wronged wife at the rectory; come back to the home of her father and mother. *You* were not the only deceived one, Vinnie; nor the worst."

Vinnie looked up at him angrily. "You are speaking of Walter Fitzurse?"

"I am. He has deceived his wife ; as he does every one."

"It's not true," Vinnie answered fiercely. "It's all untrue ! I know it is. His wife is a foolish, jealous woman, and she is wrong, quite wrong about him. Yes, I know it ; I do."

As if by a flash of light Pilgrim found the whole truth revealed to him. "You have seen Walter Fitzurse ?" he said ; "it was he who left you just now ?"

"Yes, it was. What then ? Why shouldn't he come and see me ? He is wrongfully accused, and he came to tell me not to believe anything against him ; and I don't believe it."

"My God !" Pilgrim exclaimed ; "you love that creature yet !"

"I wish you wouldn't speak so loud, Mr. Pilgrim ; you might see, if you didn't lose your temper, that there are people passing ; I suppose you don't want them to hear ? What does it matter to any one whether I love him or not ? He doesn't love me, and he is married, and if I could bring him and his wife together again there's nothing I

wouldn't do, almost. You needn't stay for me—mamma will go with me to Fitzurse House."

She turned from him in anger, and ran up the steps and went in. She hated him for the moment, she was utterly unjust to him, thinking he had been utterly unjust to Walter. She left him standing there; and Pilgrim felt the blood rushing to his head in such a way as to set him giddy. He leaned against the gate for a moment to steady himself.

CHAPTER XLII.

NEWS FROM THE SEAT OF WAR.

"Now," thought Camiola to herself, as Mrs. Pollen and she got out of the carriage and were entering Fitzurse House, "we must have this out." She meant that she must really know what Mrs. Pollen intended when she made her proposal about the escort of Albanian Joseph. "Is that her sympathy—to make a farce of one's feelings?"

They went into the music-room.

"Do you know," Mrs. Pollen said, "that I suddenly discover that I am hungry? I told them at the rectory that I wasn't, and I wasn't then; but now I am. I hope the resources of this household are equal to the emergency. They don't generally amount to

much about this hour of the evening. Will you help me to eat something, Camiola—supposing I can get anything?” Mrs. Pollen rang the bell.

“No,” Camiola answered bluntly, “I am not hungry; I have dined; and besides, I want to have a quarrel out with you first, Mrs. Pollen.”

“First? Do you mean before I have anything to eat, dear? Is not that taking me rather at an unfair advantage? Do you remember the Scottish proverb—I think it is Scottish—about the full man and the fasting?”

“I don’t; but I’ll put off my quarrel if you like until after you have had something to eat. But I really have a quarrel.”

“I am very glad,” Mrs. Pollen said; “I like quarrels.”

Her maid now came, and Mrs. Pollen gave her some orders and sent her away.

“Now then, Camiola, go ahead. My food will not be ready, I dare say, for some minutes at least; and we can have our battle-royal over in that time, I trust.”

"Well, I don't know ; it seems to me very serious."

"Good gracious ! Shall I accompany you on the organ, with something beginning softly, then getting solemn, and rising to crash and strife ?"

"I am very serious, Mrs. Pollen ; and I want you to be so too, please. You know what I think of you, and how I trust to you—and—well, I think you have won all our hearts here. But now tell me why—why—did you go on so about your imaginary Joseph ? Do our troubles seem to you only matter for laughter ? What would poor Lady Letitia have felt if she were to know who the Albanian is that you were proposing to send with us to Egypt ?"

"Yes, she would be rather amazed ; now wouldn't she ? I really did enjoy the comedy of the situation for the moment, Camiola. Yes, dear, I am wicked enough for that. I really did enjoy it. Fancy my Albanian Joseph going out to escort you safely into the outstretched arms of Georgie ! Nothing in Labiche could be more funny ! There,

now you do look angry. You think me very heartless, don't you? My dear, I have your interests at heart all the time and all the same, I can assure you."

Camiola felt that tears were coming into her eyes.

"I do believe the girl is going to cry," Mrs. Pollen said. "Well, I am not sorry, Camiola. I don't believe in girls who don't cry; and, anyhow, it is better you should cry about this now than later on. I wasn't by any means quite in jest when I talked of sending my Albanian along with you. If you go, Camiola, he goes too—take my word for it—in one capacity or another, if I can prevail upon him, and I think I can."

"Not if I asked him not to go; and you would not persevere, dear Mrs. Pollen, if I begged you not, and told you once again that it would not be of any use."

"It will be of use. Look here, girl, you are just now in the position from which only a very obtrusive and strong-willed friend can save you; and I am determined to be that very obtrusive and strong-willed friend.

You may be angry with me; I don't mind. If you were lying down in the snow of some Alpine pass and insisting on going to sleep there, as I have seen folks do more than once, and I kept shaking you, I dare say you would be angry at the moment, but I shouldn't mind, and you would thank me after."

"I think I should like to lie down in the snow somewhere and die now; just die and be out of the whole thing."

"Yes; but not much comes of talking in that way. Death is not at all necessary to extricate you from your trouble. It's all a trouble created by absurd sentimentality and mistaken self-sacrifice. I quite understand how you feel towards the Lisles. They are your oldest friends, but you have no right to sacrifice your youth, and your life, and your love to them; and they have no right to accept such a sacrifice. What about Bertie Romont? Is he nothing in the matter? Is he to be sacrificed? Not if I know it."

"I am not certain that I care so much for him now," Camiola said tremulously. "He

disappointed me—he deceived me, I was going to say. He had no right to get at the secret of a woman's heart in that way. I don't think I ought to forgive it. He thought he might try any device, I suppose, perhaps because I am not the daughter of some great house." And then she stopped, and could have bitten her tongue for saying these latter words.

"Camiola! *you* to say such a thing—and of *him*! You know that it isn't true; you know it as well as I do. I am ashamed to hear you say such a thing."

"Yes, I know it isn't true. I don't know why I said it. I couldn't believe anything like that about him; but I was angry; and I am angry; and I think it would be the meanest want of spirit on any girl's part if she didn't resent such treatment."

"Well, I can't see that there was much harm in that. I should have liked the man all the better who did as much for me, if he were my lover. Anyhow, it wasn't exactly an unpardonable sin; and it wasn't his doing, to begin with—it was my doing; all mine. I

had to argue and bully him into it, I can assure you, and to tell him that he wouldn't be worth a girl's love if he couldn't bring himself to do that much."

"He ought not to have asked advice or taken it in such a matter—about *me*."

"Are we vain? Are we proud? Have we pretty high notions of ourselves?" Mrs. Pollen said, with a smile. "Why, Camiola, my dear child, I never knew you had half these defects! This is quite a revelation of your character to me. Why, you are just as perverse and self-conceited in your way, and as full of notions, as any of us. I thought you were something approaching to perfection; and now see how you look—all red, and frowning, and hot, and out of temper. Come here, dear."

She drew the half-angry, half-amused Camiola by main force up to a great round mirror in a heavy silver frame that glittered on the wall like an antique shield. "Look at yourself there. Isn't that pretty?"

Camiola could not help laughing in all her wrath: she looked, and then looked away.

"Oh, I have faults enough, I know—that's certain; and I grant you—I would even if I had not seen myself in the glass—that the uncontrolled exhibition of them does not exactly improve my personal appearance."

"Well now, there, do you know, I don't quite agree with you. I think I never saw you looking better. I think that little burst of temper and that little outbreak of self-conceit become you ever so much."

"But really, I don't think it was self-conceit. I didn't mean it for self-conceit," Camiola pleaded humbly.

"Of course you didn't; who ever did? You meant it only for rightful self-assertion; quite a different thing, isn't it?"

"Indeed, I don't think I am self-conceited. I hope I am not. But there are things that one thinks one has a right to resent."

"I prefer to stick to the self-conceit, Camiola. I like you all the better for your faults. I should hate perfection in petticoats, if I could see it, which happily one never can. But to return, as they say in the novels. I was Bertie Romont's evil genius in the

Albanian masquerade business ; he acted on my advice and my importunity, and do you think I am going to desert him after having brought him into the trouble ? Not I ; not if I know it. You'll have to fight us both, Camiola. We'll carry you off in the end. There, you are getting angry again ; you think me an awfully intrusive person, but I don't mind."

"I am sure you mean it all in kindness to me."

"No ; not all to you, dear ; in kindness to *him* too."

Camiola blushed. "But there are others to be thought of—one must have some sense of duty."

"Meantime, my dear," Mrs. Pollen said, cutting her short, "you will give up the Egyptian expedition, won't you ? So much you will concede to me ? If not, I shall positively bring my Albanian Joseph on the stage again. There is no need of your going now. Poor little Mrs. Fitzurse can accompany her mother, and will be glad to be out of the way, no doubt. She will never return to *him* ;

you may be sure of that. I wonder if he has returned, or where he is? I sent Pilgrim to look for him, and I have not heard since either of seeker or of sought. I begin to grow anxious—I don't know why."

"Meanwhile, you are forgetting your dinner."

"True; so I am. Then our quarrel is out?"

"I am not able to quarrel with you; I am disposed to quarrel with fate and myself and everything. Oh, I am very unhappy."

"Your happiness is in your own hands."

"It isn't; oh, it isn't! Do try to understand me. I couldn't be happy if I thought Lady Letitia and all of them were wretched. I couldn't be happy if poor Georgie were killed. And then, how do I know—I don't know—whether *he* really cares for me or not?"

"My dear, you can't be absurd enough to doubt about that. I saw it long ago."

"I do doubt about it. So many things have been impelling him. You yourself, Mrs. Pollen, have talked of me, I know, in a

way that might make any young man think he was in love with me. Yes; I may as well speak it out now. I think sometimes that he would never have given a thought to me if I hadn't been put into his head—or thrown at his head! Think of a man finding out that you were in love with him before there was any appearance of his being in love with you! Why, it is a sort of Benedick and Beatrice affair; only that all the ridicule and shame fall on me only. I don't think any woman with the decent pride of a woman could give herself away under such conditions. Oh, well—there; I won't say any more about it."

"I wonder you are not more angry with me, if you think I have done so badly in all this," Mrs. Pollen said, with a certain metallic sound of displeasure in her tone.

"I can't be angry," Camiola said simply; "I can't be angry, because I know you did it all for *him*."

She got up and turned away. She feared she had said too much; yet she could not help saying it. There was a terrible fighting

in her heart between love, pride, and a mistaken, devoted sense of duty.

"I wonder if a girl was ever tried in this way before?" she asked of herself with pardonable egotism.

Mrs. Pollen's maid came in to announce dinner and to bring a letter for Camiola. It was from Lady Letitia; a hasty scrawl.

"Oh, Mrs. Pollen!" Camiola exclaimed. "Such news; such glorious news, just come from Georgie!"

With stammering voice and words all running into each other she read Lady Letitia's short note. A telegram from the War Office had just reached the rectory; the expedition was over and was quite successful; Georgie had behaved splendidly; was to be mentioned by the general in command; and had not had a wound of any kind. The campaign would soon be over.

"Isn't it splendid?" Camiola asked breathlessly.

"Oh, dear me!" was Mrs. Pollen's comment. "What a hero he will be now, to be sure."

"Yes ; isn't he brave ? I always knew he was. Oh, I do feel so happy ! If he had been killed I should never have forgiven myself. Now that he is safe and has done so splendidly I don't so much mind what happens."

"What about going to Egypt now ?" Mrs. Pollen asked.

"Now ? Well, I suppose I needn't go now ; he is all right," and Camiola blushed.

"I see," said Mrs. Pollen.

CHAPTER XLIII.

PILGRIM GIVES HIS WARNING.

NIGHT was blackening down upon the place as Pilgrim turned from Vinnie's door. After he had steadied himself for a moment or two he made a wild rush forward; he rushed like one in pursuit of some victim on whose trail he has suddenly come. All the passion of his heart was absorbed into hatred for Walter Fitzurse and resolve to be revenged upon him. Nothing being actually known to him, he magnified Fitzurse's guilt altogether; at least he magnified its deliberateness. He was convinced that Walter had set himself again to fascinate Vinnie; he did not even know whether Vinnie had not been the cause of the quarrel between Walter and his wife. In the bitterness of his heart he wished he

had never helped to save Vinnie from the river. If he had not told Romont that she was likely to come there to drown herself, Romont never would have known and she would have been drowned. Better that, a thousand times better, he thought, than to live to be deceived by Fitzurse. He began to ask himself whether it would not be an act of mere justice if he were to interpose and kill Fitzurse before it was yet too late, before Vinnie had really been brought to grief and shame. Dreamers of Pilgrim's order are dangerous men when their dreaming gives to their hatred the form of an act of justice. They are apt to make that dream a reality. Pilgrim was himself now distinctly conscious that he was moving like one in a dream. The men and women who passed him in his rapid way might have been shadows. If a ghost come from the grave had walked by his side he would not have been surprised or dismayed. Nothing could seem to him more spectral than himself; phantoms appeared, vanished, and reappeared around him as he went.

Suddenly he was brought to a stand by a short, odd figure which came in his way and barred it. This proved itself no phantom. The thin piping voice of Jethro Merridew spoke out of the night and shadow which seemed to Pilgrim to be within his own being as well as without it. He turned wild, wondering eyes on the little man.

"Whither away so fast, fair cousin?" asked Merridew. Since it had been found that Pilgrim and he were connected by marriage, Jethro had taken to calling him "fair cousin." They had been brought together a great deal by reason of the inquiries they had to make, and Pilgrim's kindly melancholy nature was always full of compassion for the half-crazed old man. "Who rides so late," Jethro went on, "in night and in wind? Hurrah! Hurrah! the dead rides fast; dost fear to ride with me?"

"I'm in a hurry, Jethro," Pilgrim said, after a gasp or two and a determined effort to pull himself together.

"Life is all a hurry," Jethro said, "and life and death ride together a good deal; just

like the pair in the ballad I've been quoting from."

"Ay, that's true; they do indeed," Christian answered grimly.

"Do you know," Jethro said, laying his thin hand on Pilgrim's arm, "I believe I shall have glad news soon. What wind so sweet as that which brings to parent heart the wandering child?"

"Have you heard anything?" Pilgrim asked, trying hard to keep down his impatience and fearing that it would overmaster him before he could get rid quietly of poor Jethro.

"I have been dreaming dreams; I have seen her in my dreams come back all bright and glorious; I have dreamed the same dream again and again. She comes in grand procession, like a fairy queen. For as I am a man I think this lady to be my child Cordelia! Oh, what happiness it will be when she comes."

Tears were big in the old man's eyes; Pilgrim could see them by the not very brilliant light of a Fitzurseham gas lamp; Fitzurseham was very chary about its local

illuminations. In all Pilgrim's own distress he could not but feel a pang of pity for Merridew. In the contemplation of Merridew's craze he felt himself grow for the moment less wild than he had been.

"Let us hope she will come some time, soon," he said soothingly. "God is very good; and you have waited a long time." Then his mind went back to its own grievance again, and he said, "I too have been waiting, a long time, a long time."

"You? What have you been waiting for?" Jethro asked with some interest. He was shrewd enough on all matters but those which concerned his lost daughter and the certainty and manner of her return. "You have no daughter to wait for."

"I have been waiting for everything that makes life worth having; and I have not got anything I waited for. Perhaps it was near and somebody came between. Look here, Jethro—suppose you knew your daughter was coming to you——"

"Suppose I knew? Man, I tell you I *do* know she *is* coming."

"Well—suppose at the last moment some one—some man—came in between you and her and took her from you, what would you do to him?"

Jethro's eyes blazed with the fire of hatred and insanity, and he clutched Pilgrim's strong arm with his thin fingers while he almost screamed out—

"What would I do to him? Why, kill him; kill, kill, kill him, to be sure. Are you mad, Pilgrim, to ask me such a question? Let me look at you." He dragged Pilgrim under the light of the lamp, and peered into his face with fiercely eager stare.

"I think I must be getting mad indeed," Pilgrim said, "when I talk in such a way to you. I ask your pardon, Merridew. I was thinking of something else. I am going on this way. I hope to hear good news from you soon." Pilgrim was growing ashamed of himself and of his lack of self-control.

"You do look strange, though," Merridew said. His flame of wrath had suddenly gone out. "You do look strange, and it is a wild night, a naughty night to swim in, as the

mad king says. Go home, Pilgrim. It is not good to be abroad on a night like this. People who are out to-night are apt to get mad somehow. I am a little queer myself, and our old friend, Walter Fitzurse—that self-conceited young burlesque Lochinvar, that ran away with the Rector's crazy daughter—he seems to me to be as mad as a hatter.”

“Why? How? Have you seen him lately?”

“Saw him just now, or his ghost—it may have been a ghost—in the old churchyard, down by the river; river that rollest by the ancient walls where dwells the lady of love; when she——”

Pilgrim did not wait for any more of the quotation, but ran in the direction of the churchyard. The gates were closed, but he knew well enough the easy way of entrance over the low wall which poor Vinnie had crossed on the night of her forlorn enterprise. He went in, and wandering along one of the paths saw Fitzurse seated on the river-wall and gazing on the clouds which were drifting over the sky. In truth, Walter was trying to

conjure poetry out of the place, the hour, the evening clouds, the river, and his own darkened destiny. He had got on to the track of something rather fine when he was aroused by the crash of Pilgrim's feet on the gravel, and he stood up.

"I have been looking for you," Pilgrim said sternly.

"Yes? What then?"

"I don't know what then, and I don't much care. They want you at the rectory. Mrs. Pollen told me to find you."

"Thank you; I will go."

"Stop! that isn't all. I saw you with Vinnie Lammas this evening. I saw you talking with her."

Walter did not like this, but he had to make the best of it. He kept down his anger.

"Well, why should I not speak to her? I have known her a long time. We are old friends."

"Friends? Friends? You have been the girl's worst enemy. She was free of you at last, and now you take to persecuting her

again. You let her alone. Listen to what I say ; if I find you ever seek out that girl again or go near her or try to have any secret talks with her—mind, I give you fair warning, and I'll keep my word——”

“Yes, what will you do ?”

Fitzurse was not wanting in mere physical courage ; but there was something unnerving in the manner of this strong prematurely bowed grey man straightening himself up with a fierce and resolute effort, and approaching nearer and nearer with livid face and glaring eyes. Walter shrank back instinctively ; he suddenly remembered Pilgrim's great strength. Pilgrim caught him with both hands, one hand on each side of his coat collar, and held him there, steadied him so that he might look more directly into his eyes ; and said in a deep hoarse voice—

“I'll kill you, kill you dead—dead !”

Then he loosed his hands so suddenly that Walter staggered back. Like one breaking away from some fearful temptation, Pilgrim scrambled on to the river-wall and dropped from it down upon the ledge of strand, which

the tide now left bare below. The drop must have been some fourteen or fifteen feet at least ; but to Pilgrim's mood it seemed as easy as stepping off an ordinary side-walk. The very manner of this sudden and strange disappearance enhanced in Walter's mind the uncanny and ominous nature of the whole scene. Pilgrim seemed like one possessed by a demon. His words sank into Walter's heart and filled him with a gloomy presentiment of ill and danger which he had not quite shaken off when he reached the rectory.

CHAPTER XLIV.

CAMIOLA STILL INTERCEDES.

WHAT was the feeling which filled Camiola's heart when she heard the news that her lover was safe thus far, and that he had proved himself a hero? Mrs. Pollen, we may be sure, watched the expression on her face very keenly, and soon came to a conclusion.

"I see," she said quietly; "you are getting reconciled to yourself, Camiola, now that Georgie has turned out so fine a fellow." Then she stopped purposely, and noted the sudden contraction of Camiola's eyebrows, and the look that seemed like a hasty protest. "No, I didn't say that, Camiola."

"Didn't say what, Mrs. Pollen?"

"Didn't say what you were going to

disclaim. I said you were growing reconciled to *yourself*, not to *him*. What you were thinking of was—perhaps he can do without me now.”

Camiola coloured. “Yes,” she answered, “that is what I was thinking of; that was what first came into my mind. They will be all so proud of him, and he will be so delighted, that I think, perhaps, he will not want me so much now. But I almost wish you hadn’t guessed it all the same.”

“I didn’t guess it; I never guess things. I saw it; I read it in your eyes.”

“Then I wish I had thought of closing my eyes just at the moment,” Camiola said, with a smile that was far from gladsome. “I wish I had closed them and kept them closed until that thought had passed out of my mind. But it doesn’t matter much after all. You know so many things about me, you may as well keep this thing a secret as all the rest.”

“Just so,” Mrs. Pollen said complacently. “I do know a good deal about you.”

There was a strange conflict of feeling in

Camiola's mind. She insisted that if Georgie wished to marry her she must still marry him. She knew Mrs. Pollen would work heaven and earth to prevent her. She was sometimes impatient and almost angry at the sort of mastery over her which Mrs. Pollen assumed. She was often almost inclined to resent the persistency with which Mrs. Pollen maintained the cause of Romont; and yet she clung to Mrs. Pollen as to a protecting power, as her last defence against a marriage with the young hero of the Egyptian fight. She felt that it was as Mrs. Pollen had put it; Mrs. Pollen was fighting Camiola's own battle against Camiola herself. Just as this feeling came clearly into her mind, Mrs. Pollen suddenly said—

“Yes, Camiola, and I'll win the battle in the end, you'll see!”

The girl positively started and looked amazed into Mrs. Pollen's face on thus finding the hidden thought of her bosom instantly translated into words—the moment it became a thought distinct enough to be recognized even by her herself.

"Shall I tell you how I got to that?"

"Indeed, I should like to know. It seems to me positively marvellous—like witchcraft."

"Witchcraft? No, not even wit; only observation. I saw the expression that came over your face when I got up—these sudden expressions are the flash-lights that guide me always, the expressions that come before the mind has any time to compose itself and make up *its* mind as to what it ought to think and feel and all that, don't you know? Well, the expression on your face was just like that of a child who has been scolded by her mother, and yet is afraid from some movement of the mother that she is going to be left alone, and doesn't like it. Now I have been scolding you very often lately, and you have been angry; but you seemed for the moment as if you were afraid I was going to leave you. Why? Because you feel that I am fighting your battle against yourself, and you begin to think that I may win in the end. There you are, Camiola—'that only is the witchcraft I have used,' as the Immortal Bard, I think, expresses it."

Camiola said no more on the subject. Christian Pilgrim presently came in looking as pale and distraught as if he had seen a ghost, and told Mrs. Pollen that he had seen Mr. Fitzurse, and that he had no doubt Mr. Fitzurse was then at the rectory.

"Then we'll not go over for a little, yet," Mrs. Pollen said to Camiola. "We'll give them an interval to arrange a treaty of peace if they can. I think I'll have my dinner now. Come and look on. Mr. Pilgrim, let them light the music-room. We'll go there after I have devoured my food, Camiola."

The devouring of the food was not a very lengthy operation. Mrs. Pollen was a poor eater. Camiola, with her healthy young appetite, could have eaten twice as much.

"There," said Mrs. Pollen, "I was so hungry; now that's done with. I am glad to be past the time when women have to affect not to be able to eat anything."

"I am sure I never affect anything of the kind," Camiola declared. "I can eat, and I don't care who knows it."

"But then, do you know, I think you are

rather wanting in affectation? I fancy a little affectation adds a charm. I sometimes wonder you can fetch the men, Camiola. You don't seem to me to do anything to attract them."

"I don't attract them, except my unfortunate Georgie and—and—yes, very few others. I didn't attract the right one—in time, anyhow."

"I suspect you would have found that you did, if only you had been a poor girl. Young men of spirit are sadly afraid of being thought to make up to a girl for her money."

"If I loved—cared for a girl—if I were a man, I shouldn't stop to think whether she had money or not," said Camiola, grandly.

Some of this talk went on as they were going through the long corridor to the music-room. Now Mrs. Pollen opened the door of the room, and they were going in. Camiola, who was first, drew back in surprise. Walter Fitzurse was there, standing right before them.

Nothing could be better composed and more picturesque than Fitzurse's attitude.

He stood with his back leaning against the door, through which he had entered, and his arms folded. His eyes were fixed upon the carpet. His face was absolutely colourless. His lips were firmly set together, with the expression of one who is now made up for any fortune. There was, however, a slight penitential stoop of the shoulders which seemed to appeal to the charity and indulgence of those who might look upon a forlorn youth, victim of errors which he did not propose to defend, but victim also of an adverse fate. It is very difficult sometimes for one to analyze correctly one's own sensations, and say whether the compound of emotion under certain circumstances has in it more of pleasure or more of pain. It would be hard for us, therefore, to say whether at this moment there was more of a feeling of pleasure or of pain in the melodramatic heart of Walter Fitzurse. Certainly he felt like a ruined man, but then he also felt that the part he was playing was delightfully romantic.

"You did not expect me here," he said, in

a low and pathetic tone. "Do not go, Miss Sabine; I have nothing to say which you may not hear."

"Stay, Camiola," Mrs. Pollen said decisively. "No, I certainly didn't expect you here. How did you get in?"

"Oh!" He spoke in a voice of surprise and pain. "Have you already forgotten, so soon in the history of my misfortunes, that you once classed me among your chosen friends, and that I have still your key to let me in? I saw the lights—one of your curtains is not drawn. I wanted to see you, and I am here."

"Well, now that you are here, suppose we all sit down."

Walter placed chairs with an indescribable air of dethroned-prince about all his movements.

"You have been to the rectory?"

"I have. It is all over."

"She will not go back?"

"She will not."

"Have you seen her?"

"No; she will not see me; she refused

absolutely. Her father and mother both besought her, but she would not. Well, I don't blame her. She might have forgiven, perhaps, but she would not, and Heaven knows she has had much wrong."

"She has had very much wrong," Mrs. Pollen said sharply.

"She has ; I said so. Every one will say the same ; every one is against me. No one feels the slightest concern for me." He looked at Camiola, and he saw that a look of pity came over her face. She did feel pity for him, he seemed so penitent and so lonely, but she remained silent. "If I could have seen her—if I could see her yet," he exclaimed passionately, "I think I could move her. It cannot be but that she loves me still."

"Oh, can't anything be done?" Camiola interposed, unable any longer to control her feelings.

Walter sent her a glance of the profoundest gratitude. It was with a feeling of almost ecstatic emotion that he found himself the object of her interest and her sympathy ; for

so he read her pity for him, her affection for Janette.

"Thank you, Miss Sabine," he said, in a low tone. "You have not steeled your heart against me."

"Miss Sabine's heart is still young and tender and foolish," Mrs. Pollen said. "Miss Sabine doesn't know quite as much about that paragon of animals, man, as it has been my misfortune to do. Well, about anything being done, the question is, what can be done?"

"If Miss Sabine would plead for me——" he was beginning.

"But she won't," Mrs. Pollen broke in peremptorily.

"But I have," Camiola said; "I have done it already, I have said what I could, and it was quite in vain."

"Even to see me and hear me—even that? I ask no more. Surely she might concede that much?"

"I asked her," Camiola said pathetically, "and she wouldn't."

Mrs. Pollen was growing impatient. She

was afraid Camiola's kindly heart was likely to be imposed upon by what she considered to be mere acting and attitudinizing.

"Well, the best thing is," she said, "for you to go away now, and leave me to think of what can yet be done, if anything can be done. Suppose she will not see you, what then do you propose to do?"

"The best thing for me would be death."

"Yes," Mrs. Pollen said, after a pause, as if she had been slowly considering the matter; "I rather agree with you there. I think that would be the best way out of it for all parties——"

"Mrs. Pollen!" Camiola pleaded, "how can you?"

"Well, he can't live for ever, you know," the imperturbable lady replied; "but he is not going to die just this time. So we may put that out of the question. In the event, then, of the thunderbolt failing to strike you down, or the earth not opening to swallow you, or, what is just as likely, your failing to drown or poison yourself, what do you propose to do?"

"You are very hard on me," he said, with a flush passing over his face as he felt the sting of her pitiless words, barbed by her utter disbelief in him and contempt for him. "What do you think I ought to do? Would you like me to go away, to become an exile? I will if you like."

"Becoming an exile is, I suppose, heroic for going to America or Australia? No; that isn't my idea. My idea is this—stay where you are; go on with your work at the bar, and your literary career, if you have any. Stick to your work—bite into it. Shake off once for all your rubbish and nonsense; show your wife and your wife's people that you have some stuff in you. Do that, and act like a man, and even yet things may come right with you. Above all things drop play-acting. See yourself as you are, and try to be something very different. A man could live down all this and much more; be a man; that's all I have to say."

"Then you don't wholly abandon me, even yet?"

"I? Oh, well, I am rather a bad lot. I

stick to people sometimes when all decent folk have felt compelled to throw them over. I'll see if I can do anything. A good deal will depend on yourself. I tell you candidly, I am getting tired of you. I think the best thing you can do now is to go. Leave me your address, and I will write to you when I have anything to say. Of course you are not going back to the house that belongs to Mr. Lisle?"

"Never!" he exclaimed, with indignant emphasis. "Unless I go back at Janette's wish and the wish of her parents."

"Quite so," Mrs. Pollen said grimly.

He had intended to go back there, and to keep there as long as he could, and she knew this. She knew it by the sudden fervour of his denial. He laid upon the table his card with his club address. She nodded to him and he was going. He looked so unhappy that Camiola could not help holding out her hand in pity to him. He took it, bent over it, pressed it to his lips, and was gone in a moment.

"How could you let him kiss your hand?" Mrs. Pollen asked.

"I couldn't help it. I couldn't bear to see him go away like that. It is terrible to see a human creature, a man especially, brought so low and so crushed. Oh, I couldn't help giving him my hand, I couldn't, I couldn't. Don't we say every day in our prayers that we are miserable sinners? What hypocrites we are if we don't mean it, and what awful humbugs if we do mean it and yet are pitiless to other sinners. I can't do it."

"I wonder how many last chances he is to get?" Mrs. Pollen asked after a moment. "Well, I don't mind. Suppose we give him another? What do you say?"

"I would give him another," Camiola declared with promptitude and resolve. "I would give him twenty others. I think it is terrible to have these two separated for ever; they must have loved each other once. I don't recognize my dear old Janette at all in this."

"Well, *I* was always a woman of softness and of sentiment—I am like Richard the Third, I am 'too childish-foolish for this world,' Camiola. So as you back up his

petition I am prepared to grant it. But how can we bring it about? She refuses positively to see him. How are we to bring them together?"

"Let him come here the day you have your mummeries; let him mingle in the crowd and come on her somehow."

"Would she come, do you think?"

"She will come, I think. She is very proud. She will want to show that the world goes on for her all the same; and Mr. Lisle and Lady Letitia will be glad to see her do anything which may tend to discredit anything like scandal. If she is seen at your revelries, nine out of every ten people here will think there is nothing in the whole story about her separation from her husband."

"Dear me," Mrs. Pollen observed, "what a great deal of the wisdom of the serpent is mixed up with the harmlessness of the dove among you good people! Now, do you know that would never have occurred to me? What I mean is, that if I were determined to separate myself from my husband, I would do so

in defiance of all the world, and I shouldn't care who knew it."

"But in Mr. Lisle's case it is so different," Camiola urged. "A clergyman, and a clergyman's family! Any scandal and separation of husbands and wives might do so much harm, would seem to set such a bad example."

"Just so; why doesn't Janette think of all that, and not set the bad example?"

"I don't know. Her heart seems to be closed against him. Indeed, he is what people call a bad lot, I am greatly afraid. Still he is her husband, and I can't help pitying him."

"Nothing interests me," Mrs. Pollen said gravely, "like the wiles of the simple and the dodges of the straightforward. It is to me a subject deserving of the profoundest contemplation. So we good people are all to play a little game, the Rector as well as the rest, to make the outer public think we are not doing what we are doing? Well, anyhow, if this little game is to be played, I think yours is a capital notion. I'll write to him, and ask him

to come, and tell him how he is to manage. I'll answer for his coming if you will answer for hers, Camiola."

"Indeed, I'll not answer for anything of the kind now ; for all I can tell she may take some notion into her head that she ought not to go out ; and if she does I could not move her from that. I will do my best, of course. She musn't be allowed to have any suspicion that he is going to be here. How sad it all is ! What disappointment, and confusion, and separation——"

"And mummery within mummery. Well, that is the way of life ; and I am pleased that my mummery should now have a new and romantic interest. Don't look horrified, Camiola ; I don't mean that I only care about the fun of the thing. If my mummery can help to bring these two together and make a man of that wretch, I shall be grateful to it."

"As if I didn't know you," was all Camiola said.

Now, this mummery of which they had been talking was an entertainment which Mrs. Pollen had been planning for all and

sundry in Fitzurseham, and which was to take place in the restored and renovated Fitzurse House. It was to be her house-warming, in fact; and there were to be dramatic *tableaux* and much music, and various games and sports, and liberal eating and drinking. When the news came of Georgie's danger, Mrs. Pollen thought of putting it off; but now that he was known to be safe, that he had performed what she was pleased to call in her irreverent way "prodigies of valour," there seemed only the greater reason why Fitzurseham should rejoice. By a happy coincidence a travelling circus company, attracted to Fitzurseham by the fame of the new life Mrs. Pollen's settlement there had infused into the region, was coming with its show just at the same time, and Mrs. Pollen had a strong notion of engaging some of its beauty and talent, its trained dogs, and even its accomplished ponies, in order that her poor neighbours might enjoy the sight without having to pay for the pleasure. In this entertainment it was now designed that Walter Fitzurse should have his last chance.

CHAPTER XLV.

A YOUNG MAN FROM THE DOCKS.

WALTER FITZURSE did not return any more to the West End house which he had lived in for so short a time. He remained as a resident in his chambers; oscillated for a few days between the chambers and his club. The club was now all that was left to him of his brief connection with what he considered fashionable life. Still, of course, there was the consoling thought that he was actually married to the granddaughter of an earl. Nothing could alter that fact. He was distinctly and closely connected with the aristocracy by marriage. For one who but a few years ago was a poor unfriended youth studying shorthand under Christian Pilgrim in forlorn Fitzurseham, this was not bad. In

his dreamy fashion he often sat long and late in his chambers of a night thinking over this, the while he sipped whisky and water and smoked a cigar. On the whole he was not unhappy or much dissatisfied with what fortune had done for him.

He did not cross the water or go near Fitzurseham. It was as well, he thought, to keep away altogether from Vinnie Lammas. Not that he meant the girl any harm; but that fellow Pilgrim was so suspicious, and was getting such a madman. Pilgrim's manner and Pilgrim's threats the other night had made a painful impression on him. He sometimes woke up at night with a start from some horrible dream, in which he fancied that Pilgrim was trying to strangle him or to drown him. Once he thought that Vinnie was there, and that she made an effort to save him and shrieked for help; the shriek seemed to wake him. Another time he dreamed that Pilgrim was trying to push him over the edge of some dizzy height, and that Joseph, the Albanian, was looking on and smiling contemptuously at Walter's supplica-

tions for rescue. This dream made a most uncomfortable impression on him. He began to be convinced that something bad was to happen to him in which Pilgrim and the Albanian were to bear a part together. This was another reason for his avoiding Fitzurseham, even if he had any motive for going there just now, which he had not. He did not go to see Mrs. Pollen at her hotel; he understood from her that if she had anything to say she would send for him, and that he was not to go until then. He had still some money left, and he was sure that Mrs. Pollen had not altogether abandoned him. He was playing at studying hard for law, and he had begun ever so many things in a literary way and had not gone on with them. In truth, this self-elected literary man had no particular aptitude for literature. He was a clever young man, but his cleverness had not thus far taken any form.

Days and days went on, and the world seemed to be forgetting him; seemed to be doing remarkably well without him. He looked in at his club every day for luncheon,

and occasionally dined there, but not often, for he did not wish it to be supposed that nobody ever asked him out to dine. Few of the regular club-men had come back to town ; it was in the dead waste and middle of the autumn. These were days when he did not speak to a soul from morning to night except to an occasional waiter. He dined at all sorts of restaurants, varying the scene a good deal, and always dining well while the money lasted. His funds began, however, to run low. One day when he had but little left, and did not know how he was to get any more without asking Mrs. Pollen, who might refuse him, he treated himself to a particularly nice little dinner, not feeling sure that he might have such a chance for some time again. He had some excellent dry champagne and a liqueur, and he enjoyed himself in his peculiar way, feeling a certain pride in his very ruin, regarding it as an undeniable distinction. Then he looked into a little theatre, and saw part of a burlesque or *opera bouffe* or something with pretty girls in it, and not too much drapery but just drapery enough.

Then he went home sentimentally desponding, and in his chambers he found two letters for him—one in a large envelope, the other in a small one. The large envelope enclosed a card of highly artistic and fanciful device, informing him that Mrs. Pollen would be at home at Fitzurse House on a certain day in the following week, and that there would be *tableaux vivants*, music, and conjuring. He had heard something about this before, but it had passed out of his memory, and in any case he presumed that he would not be expected to go. He was mistaken, however, for the small envelope enclosed a note from Mrs. Pollen, saying she particularly wished him to go to her house-warming, and telling him that if he called on her at the West End she would explain to him the reason why, and of course he assumed that it had something to do with his wife. The letter ended with the words, "Perhaps you may not have much money left; I send enclosed," and enclosed was a bank-note for one hundred pounds. That neat little sum opened up quite a vista for our prose-poet; poet, that is

to say, who had not yet written any poetry. Who knows what might happen before the hundred pounds was out? He might be reconciled with Janette and living in the West End; or his genius might be discovered by some publisher, editor, or manager. He felt on the whole well content with himself and his prospects. The only thing he did not like was the having to go to Fitzurseham. He had determined not to go there; and now he must go. He felt as if there was something ominous of evil to him in that. If he went there he must meet Pilgrim; he might meet the Albanian; and then what about his dream? But he put this thought away. Who cares about dreams now, and what harm could Pilgrim and the Albanian do to him?

On the very evening when Walter received his invitation, Mrs. Pollen was dining alone in her hotel. She was very busy about the arrangements for her entertainment at Fitzurse House, and she was constantly receiving visits from all manner of persons—tradesmen, decorators, artificers, caterers, up-

holsterers, and others—whom she was employing, or who were anxious to be employed, in the preparations for the festival. Her maid, therefore, was not in the least surprised when she said—

“I wish you would tell them that I expect a young man, a young working-man, from the docks, here at nine, and that he is to be shown in at once when he comes.”

Nine o'clock came and the young man with it. He was shown in at once and left with Mrs. Pollen. He seemed a well-made, loose-limbed young fellow, something between a rigger and a seaman; his face and hands were pitchy as the seams of the wrecking vessel in the Bay of Biscay, whereof Sims Reeves still sings.

“No ceremony; came just as I am, you see,” said the young man, with a familiarity which did not seem altogether in keeping with the manners proper to his station in life.

“All right,” Mrs. Pollen said, apparently without the slightest feeling of surprise or resentment, “won’t you sit down?”

"What, in these garments, and on that chair? Not if I know it. I hope I know my place better than that."

"Well, and you have really been down at the docks all day looking for work? What an absurd creature you are!"

"Looking for work? Yes; and I got work; and many a poor fellow who really wanted it didn't. I tell you what; it's an awful sight to see some of these poor chaps; the elder ones especially. I am going to write a lot about it—for the *St. James's Gazette*, I think. My heavens, what a great deal wants doing in this huge vast wilderness of a place! One gets utterly discouraged sometimes—the whole thing seems so hopeless."

"You don't appear to get discouraged."

"Oh, well, the fact is I like it; I couldn't live without the excitement just now. It keeps my own troubles out of my head, and there's a good deal in that. I should be sure to make a fool of myself somehow if I didn't try to get mixed up in the affairs of other people."

"You'll have to give up all that sort of thing when you get married, I dare say."

"I don't think so. *She's* not the sort of girl to like a man who did nothing."

The intelligent reader will not, we presume, need to be told who this young man from the docks really was.

"Well, I told you about the Egyptian expedition?"

"Yes; is it given up?"

"Not at all. It's on again. They all stick to it."

"Does *she* stick to it?"

"She does. She thinks she is bound. Are you going to stand that, I want to know?"

"No, Mrs. Pollen; my mind is made up. I won't stand it. She shan't go; or if she goes I will go too. I have thought all this thing out lately. She has two points of honour, and they are both mistakes. I like a woman who has points of honour; I love *her* all the more; but she is wrong, and it would be absurd to let her have her way and victimize herself. She thinks she is bound

to sacrifice herself for the Lisle family ; I don't. She thinks she oughtn't to give in to marrying me after the way in which I found out what she felt, and all that. I don't think anything of the kind. Now, it is plain that both she and I can't have our way in this ; so I mean to take on me to act for both ; I am going to have my way."

The young man from the docks struck the table emphatically with his clenched and somewhat pitchy hand.

"Respect the hotel furniture," Mrs. Pollen said ; "it is rickety ; it hasn't the solidity of my Fitzurseham sticks. Well, you have made rather a long speech, but I listened attentively all the time, and I entirely approve of your sentiments. I think they do equal honour to your head and heart, as the orators are in the habit of expressing it. Of course I am prepared to assist you ; I go with you, Bertie, heart and soul." She spoke these last few words in a tone different from that in which she had spoken before. She dropped affected levity and chaff for the moment, and spoke in a voice of friendship, sincerity, and tenderness.

"I knew you would," he said. "I have told my mother all about this business."

"Yes ; what does she say ?"

"Well, of course, she never saw Camiola ; but she is willing to take her on trust."

"Is she content with your marriage scheme ?"

"She is ; she generally likes anything I like ; we get on so well together. I fancy there is a little touch of sadness to one's mother always when she finds some other woman turning up—is not that so, don't you think ?"

"I don't know ; I never was a mother."

"But one reads books and hears things, and I fancy it is so. But that won't affect my mother much ; she is so unselfish. She has got quite out of the way of thinking about herself. Besides, I dare say she has some idea like yours, that getting married will keep me out of all manner of adventures and enterprises. She was always afraid I should get drowned, or catch fever, or small-pox, or something ; now she thinks I shall have to settle down."

"Does she know that Camiola is a girl with a fortune?"

Romont looked embarrassed.

"No; she didn't ask me anything about it; and I forgot it altogether. I wish she hadn't a fortune. But I suppose it can't be helped. Do you know, Mrs. Pollen, that if I weren't so madly in love with her I should regard that confounded fortune as a serious objection. I don't think I could get over it."

"I quite understand you," Mrs. Pollen said. "I am sure if I were a man I would rather marry a girl who hadn't a sixpence. But that wouldn't be quite a reason for not marrying the girl one loved, would it, especially if she loved one?"

"Oh, by Jove," Romont exclaimed, "I wouldn't give up Camiola if she were a female Cræsus."

"I like your confidence, young man! You seem to take it quite for granted that Camiola will marry you."

"Yes, she will marry me," Romont said impetuously. "I really believe we were made for one another."

"It makes me young again," Mrs. Pollen observed, "to hear any one talk in that way ; about people being made for one another. Oh, you dear, darling pair of fools—pair of lovers, I mean ; and so you were made for one another, you two ! From all the ages, I suppose ; creation paused in its work to shape you for each other ! How very nice ! Well, I do really believe that you were in one sense made for one another ; I thought it from the first ; that is why I helped you all I could."

"You did, indeed ? How lucky a fellow I am ! I was telling my mother that there are three women in the world whom I adore——"

"Good gracious !" Mrs. Pollen exclaimed.

"Yes, I adore them all three, and I am in love with one of them, besides adoring her——"

"We know her name. The other is your mother, of course. But who on earth is the third ?"

"As if you didn't know," he said, with beaming eyes. "Why you, of course. As if you didn't know that I adore you ! Good

heavens! how could I do anything else? And I can't do anything for you—not a thing; I haven't any way of showing you what I feel.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Pollen, smiling through her unmistakable tears; “do you think it is nothing for me to have your friendship?”

“Oh, come, friendship won't express it—doesn't get near it.”

“Well, your affection, then.”

“Affection, gratitude, devotion——”

“Well, well, well, you are fond of me, Bertie, and I am fond of you. I told you the first day we met that you would like me in the end and that I could wait.”

“By Jove, you hadn't long to wait.”

“No; and I am very glad. I don't like wasting time. Life is short; it is getting particularly short with people at my time of life. I owe you a great deal, Bertie Romont; you and your sweetheart too. You two have done more to make me happy and to make me like the world and put up with it than any two people I have met for I don't know

how long ; for forever, perhaps. I knew you from the first, my dear boy ; I saw to your heart in a glance, and I knew her too ; and I am fond of you both ; and I couldn't say if I were put under cross-examination which of you I am fonder of, except that I suppose my general inclination is to lean towards the man. Well, there's no use in saying more about that ; we understand each other. I want now to talk to you about my mummery ; I want all manner of advice and assistance. First, I want you on that occasion, and for positively the last time, to assume the part of Joseph, the Albanian."

" Oh, must I really ? "

" You must ; I have a particular reason for it, which I will explain to you presently. You are to appear in your own character too ; you are to double the part."

" All right," he said, " I'll do whatever you like."

" Good boy."

CHAPTER XLVI.

JETHRO'S DAUGHTER COMES HOME.

THE Fitzurseham people began more and more to shake their heads over poor Jethro Merridew. He was getting every day more "off his nut," as they put it gracefully. Not a few of them expressed their sense of his condition by jeering at him more loudly than ever as he passed along the street. Jethro bore their insults with a sort of prince-like contempt. Some of the better-hearted of the neighbours endeavoured to talk with him sympathetically, and to these he would say again and again that his daughter was coming home very soon now. No inquiries made on Mrs. Pollen's behalf had led to any discovery concerning the daughter. Mrs. Pollen and Pilgrim both tried as well as they could to

get him to understand this, and to soften its meaning to him. But he would not listen to anything on the subject. He knew better, he said; he knew all about it. Of late he kept away from Mrs. Pollen and from Pilgrim; of late, too, Pilgrim was thinking of other things. Jethro went about his business as usual; he called people in the mornings with all his habitual regularity. When he ever went to sleep no one could tell. He certainly never slept until he had performed the last of his morning calls, and then people saw him wandering about nearly all day long afterwards. For some days now he had resolutely kept indoors when once his work of calling was done. He began not to like the streets, and to shrink from them. Those who did see him, if they were at all sympathetic, thought they saw something in his face that spoke of coming death.

The morning of the day when Mrs. Pollen was to have her entertainment Jethro made his round of calls as usual. He was tired then, and longed to sleep. He went into the Old Ferry Inn, which was just taking down

its shutters to entertain early bargemen, and market gardeners, and cart drivers, and he asked for some brandy. Such indulgence was the rarest thing in Jethro's case, and the bargemen did not fail to chaff him pleasantly over his new-born drinking ways. Jethro made no answer; he swallowed his brandy greedily, and went home. The dawn was coming on; a soft, bright, tender morning in October, the brightness made mild by the sweet melancholy of the season. Jethro went upstairs to his little room looking on the street; he lay down in his clothes, and he slept a long time. He was dreaming of his daughter, of her coming back to him, of her greatness and splendour, and her love for him. She was coming, he dreamed, to rescue him from his sad, lonely life. She was coming with music and attendants, with friends on horseback and in carriages, just as fair Inez, whom he loved to read of and to quote, went down to the seashore when she was about to depart. The strains of music growing louder and louder seemed to mingle in his dream. Suddenly he woke up with a

start ; he gathered himself together, and such senses as he had. There was music. Yes, it was growing louder and louder. She was coming ; he had wakened only just in time. He would have been late if he had slept longer ; she would have had to come to his door and knock. He would not have been up and across the threshold to welcome her.

He ran to the window. Yes, there was a long procession coming down the street. There was music ; the clangour of cymbals, the heavy throb of the drum ; the shrill fifes. There was shouting and cheering ; the street was thronged with people. He could just see that there were horses in the procession, and that there were gorgeous carriages. Yes, this was his daughter's coming home ; he never felt a doubt about it ; never questioned himself. He knew it ; this was she ; at last, at last, she had come.

He ran downstairs, and opened his door, and stood just outside the threshold ready to welcome her. The people hardly noticed or saw him, so intent were they on gazing at the

procession. He was for once rather sorry not to be noticed ; they ought to see him in the hour of his pride who had seen him so long and so often in his solitude and poverty. Never had he seen such a procession ; there were camels, there was an elephant. Could his daughter be an Eastern queen, the wife of some great Asiatic sovereign ? Why not ? Such things had been. He would soon know, he thought in exultation. Now came riders ; brilliant cavaliers and splendid ladies. They passed him two and two ; he thought the line would never cease ; and yet he was conscious, too, that this was but his own impatience, for there were not many couples. At length he saw a carriage drawn by four white horses, and in the carriage a lady who stood erect and princess-like glittering in gorgeous array, and with much silver about here whereon the sunlight flashed. He could see her clearly above the crowd, and now he saw her face and he gave a wild cry of rapture.

“She is come—my love, my dove, my beautiful, my undefiled !” screamed the poor

half-crazy man, and he burst his way through the crowd, and ran up to the side of the carriage. "My daughter, my daughter!" he called to her, and he laid his lean skinny hand on the side of the carriage. The woman who stood in the carriage wore a long garment of gorgeous red, white, and blue, and she had a silvered breastplate and a shield, and on her head a silvered helmet. She was, in fact, got up to represent the popular idea of Britannia. She was no longer young. Her face had been handsome, but was worn and was raddled with stage-painting. Hearing the old man's shriek she looked down at him, first with wonderment and then with a growing recognition, still doubtful and amazed. There was confusion for a moment; the poor old man tried to get into the carriage; the attendants, thinking him a drunken madman, tried to drag him away; one of the postilions on the horses struck back at him with his whip. The crowd then recognized Jethro Merridew, and, beginning to understand how his craze was working on him, shouted and cheered with delight.

Why, this was better fun than even the procession, and the elephant and camels ! Here was old Merridew gone raving mad at last, and taking a painted circus woman for his daughter and a grand lady ! Laughter made the welkin ring.

“Take care of the poor old gentleman ; don't 'urt him,” said Britannia pityingly ; and remarked to an attendant nymph, “Well, if I don't believe it is my poor old father !”

Jethro was, after all, but mad north-north-west. He was shaken in mind, indeed, but he was not a mere lunatic. He had been sleeping a heavy sleep induced by the effects of brandy, unusual to him. He had been dreaming of his daughter's splendid return with music and cavalcade ; he woke, or half-woke, to the sound of music ; he heard the trampling of horses ; he saw a procession with cavaliers and dames in it, and then in a splendid carriage he recognized his daughter. What wonder if all this fitted in with his dream, and seemed only the dream become reality ? But now as he clung to the carriage and gazed eagerly at his recovered daughter,

and as his senses, such as they were, began to clear, he could not help seeing in his mind what his eyes told him ; he could not but see the paint on the face ; the black lines round the eyes ; the made-up eyebrows ; the woman's figure grown heavy and elderly ; the tawdry dress ; the spangles ; the Britannia get-up ; the silvered-tin of the shield and helmet. It was his daughter — oh yes, indeed ! He had found her. She had come back ; not to him, not seeking him ; and she had come back with paint on her cheeks, and spangles and tin on her robes ; she had come back in a Merry-Andrew procession, a circus-riding woman.

He fell back from the carriage and among the crowd. He was dazed ; he was crushed in spirit. He cared nothing for the jeering mob. He cared nothing if he were to be trampled on by the horses. He might have been trampled on as he staggered away but for the prompt and energetic assistance of Christian Pilgrim. Pilgrim had been out — not, indeed, to look at the procession, for he had an utter contempt for all manner of

shows ; but he had been caught in its stream and wave, and was submitting very unwillingly to be dragged along as a captive of the fair Britannia and her train when his eyes were attracted by the sight of poor old Jethro struggling to reach the car. Pilgrim had not the least idea of what Jethro was trying to do, but he felt sure that the poor old man was likely to make a display of himself in some more or less ridiculous way, and perhaps to become a sport to the very pitiless merriment of the Fitzurseham mob. He caught bewildered Merridew in his strong arms and forced a way through the crowd.

“What’s the matter with the old fool?” a man asked of Pilgrim as they were making their way.

Pilgrim’s only answer was to elbow the man aside, and to hasten with his poor old companion towards Merridew’s house.

“Oh, don’t you know?” he heard some one else reply to the questioner whom he had thus roughly put away, “Old Merridew’s gone clean off his ’ead, and he’s taken a circus woman for his daughter.”

That told Pilgrim what he had not known before ; all he wanted to know.

“ Shall we go home, Jethro ? ” he asked in a voice of compassion.

“ Yes ; I am better at home. I don’t want to go out any more. I think I must have been going crazy, Pilgrim ; I am like King Lear in the play. It was my Cordelia, though. It was my daughter, Pilgrim.” He did not call him “ fair cousin ” any more. “ She is not young, and she is a poor circus rider ; but she is my daughter all the same, and I think she knew her poor old father. I was foolish to make such an exhibition of myself and of her. I think I must have been out of my right mind, Pilgrim, lately ; I suppose the people laughed at me.”

“ It doesn’t matter,” Christian said, “ you have found your daughter, Jethro ; that’s something. You had better go in now.”

“ Yes, it is something. To think of all the years and years and years I have been expecting her and believing that she was to come to me a splendid, happy lady ! I don’t know how I ever got such a thought into my

head, but it always seemed to me like a revelation from heaven. I'll go in and I'll stay in, until she comes. She will come, don't you think ? ”

“ She will come, I am sure ; I will go and find her out when all this fuss is over, and tell her where you are.”

By this time they were at Jethro's door. The crowd in the street were again absorbed in the successive wonders of the procession, and had forgotten all about the foolish, fond old man. The Fitzurseham crowd was a prudent and a practical crowd in its quest for amusement ; and even if it had still been thinking of Jethro, it would have remembered that he was there at hand to be made fun of any day, but that an elephant and camels and a procession of splendid cavaliers and dames were a rare visitation in that place. The crowd would, therefore, have reserved Jethro, and devoted itself just then to the too fleeting delights of the procession.

Pilgrim saw Jethro safely into his room, and talked a little with him. He had not found the old man so reasonable in mind and

manner for years and years. The shock and the disappointment seemed to have brought back his wandering senses. He was sane, and utterly despondent.

"Isn't there something, Pilgrim, in one of the classic poets about a man being cured of some delusion and made sane, and being only miserable because he was sane?" Jethro suddenly asked.

"Is there? Very likely," Pilgrim said.

"Well, I'm like that man."

These were the last words Pilgrim ever heard him speak. As the old man said them he was stretching himself down on his bed, still quite dressed, and with his face turned away from the window through which he had seen the first glimpse of the procession, and from the mild autumnal sunlight. His face shewed like a mask of grey wax as Pilgrim looked on it before he left the room. It was late in the evening when Pilgrim found the long-lost daughter. He found her a prematurely decayed, not unkindly wreck of a dissipated woman. She said she would go and see her father as soon as ever she could.

She went an hour or two later and knocked at the door, but got no answer. She pushed the door, found it unfastened, went in, and ranged the poor little wretched rooms. At last, mounting the stairs, she came to her father's bedroom door, and found him lying dead.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE LAST CHANCE.

THE festivities at Fitzurse House went on all the same, although Jethro Merridew could have no part in them. "Merry was the world, though he was dead," writes Mr. Morris of a somewhat more interesting figure than poor Jethro Merridew; and it would take the world of Fitzurseham very little time indeed to get over its feeling of grief at the loss of Jethro Merridew. But it is only just to say that Mrs. Pollen and most of her guests knew nothing of the old man's death until the night's revelries were well-nigh over, and by that time some of them at least had other things to think of.

The gardens were starred with coloured lamps. The newest devices of South Ken-

sington pageantry made the waters of the fountain leap up in many-tinted radiance to the dark of the evening skies, and filled the hearts of Fitzurseham youth and likewise, indeed, Fitzurseham old age with wonder and ecstasy. The night was so fine and warm for the time of the year that many were induced to come from the crowded and heated rooms into the cool pure air, and so the coloured fountains had plenty of admirers. Nothing could be a sadder and a vainer spectacle in its way than a coloured fountain displaying all its prodigality of tints and its high-soaring jets of activity with no one to look on and admire. The coloured fountains of Fitzurse House were spared that humiliation by the singular fineness of the night.

Mrs. Pollen received her guests in the great drawing-room on the ground floor. She was dressed very plainly this night, and made little display of jewellery. She was very proud of the fact that she now knew all her company by sight, and could address every Fitzursehamite who came by his or her name, and make some appropriate in-

quiry. The room was already beginning to be crowded. Romont, in his character of Albanian Joseph, hung about a little in the background, but yet in ostensible attendance on Mrs. Pollen, and occasionally summoned to her side by a signal from her fan and bidden to do this or that for her. Suddenly he drew back and all but concealed himself in a crowd of admiring and yet shrinking Fitzursehamites, some of whom looked on Albanian Joseph as a sort of creature hardly less wondrous and out of their way than a ghost. Romont drew back and was trying to conceal himself because he saw Camiola come in and he did not like to be seen by her just then and in his Albanian masquerade, which he feared would bring unpleasant recollections back to her mind. Camiola had chosen a richer and more matronly style of dress than she usually affected. Mrs. Pollen had asked her to dress herself particularly nicely for the pleasure of the Fitzursehamites, and Camiola, like a good girl, did as she was told. Her robe of old-fashioned brocade, in the nondescript colouring of which all shades

of yellow and brown seemed to blend agreeably, fell in straight folds round her form, and had a severe simplicity which was in keeping with her somewhat grave mien and the erect carriage of her head. She held a great round fan of yellow and brown ostrich feathers which might have been borne by one of the stately dames who had in old times crowded the slippery staircase of Fitzurse House. Golden brown plumes nestled in her bodice, confined by a quaint ornament of topaz and pearl, and there were topazes in her brown hair and round her girlish neck. She might, except for her warm and healthy vitality, have been one of the beautiful shadows of an old time with whom Mrs. Pollen's imagination used once to people the rooms. So Mrs. Pollen, too, was thinking, and suddenly she saw that Christian Pilgrim, who was acting generally as a sort of major-domo, was gazing at the girl with a look of intense admiration and melancholy, as if some thought of the same kind were passing through his mind. Somebody stopped Camiola and spoke to her; it was

Vinnie Lammas. The contrast was curious ; the rich dress, the healthy vigorous beauty, the splendour of movement as well as of adornment of the one girl, and the pale, distressful look of the other, with her neat but somewhat shabby get-up, and her aspect of unsuitability with the place and the crowd. The contrast was perhaps the more striking because Vinnie was looking very pretty and picturesque in her way. Poor Pilgrim looked sadly at them both ; he was even more pallid than usual. Mrs. Pollen felt that something was wrong with him. She called Romont to her, and, in a low tone, asked him to look after Pilgrim, to get into talk with him, and find if anything was wrong. Romont promised, and as he was going away turned back just for a moment. They had been speaking up to this time in the semi-Italian jargon which they used on such occasions.

"Doesn't she look lovely to-night, my queen-girl?" he whispered in English, his head bent in Joseph's habitual attitude of deference.

"Young man," Mrs. Pollen responded,

"do you think I am in the habit of conversing with menials on the personal charms of the young ladies I receive in my house? Have you spoken to her?" she whispered.

"Not yet. I haven't had the chance. Must it be done while I am in this mummer's costume?"

"It must. That is my idea altogether. You have a better right to speak to her in that mummer's costume, as you call it, than in any other. It was in that you found her out."

"I believe you are right," he said.

"Thank you; I am always right."

The Rector and Lady Letitia had already come and were mingling with the guests: he awkward and shy; she doing her very best, and apparently with much success, to hide for the moment the varied feelings of her heart, perturbed by mingled sorrow, joy, and anxiety. Would Janette come? Yes; Janette actually had come. She was very pale, and looked singularly pretty, and the effort she was making to throw her soul into the business of the evening gave a sparkle to

her eyes which was like the light of pleasure for those who are not quick in seeing any difference between one light and another.

Camiola had been miserably unhappy all day. She began to look forward more and more with dread and shame to the prospect of marriage with Georgie Lisle. If she went out to Egypt, she knew it must be ; and now they were going to Egypt. The keen strain of anxiety about Georgie's life was over ; every one said the campaign was virtually at an end. He was safe, he would soon be in civilized Cairo again. He was a hero ; why should she any longer be compelled to go near him ? Had he not enough now ? How absurdly inconsistent this all was, to be sure ! To promise a man that she would marry him if he should escape alive out of the danger, and then to think that she ought to be released from her promise because that very condition had been fulfilled and he had escaped out of the danger—surely a less intelligent girl than Camiola must have seen the utter inconsistency and absurdity of such conduct. Exactly, and Camiola did see it,

but she could not make things any different. She could not make her feelings at the present hour the same as they were in those moments of prostration and despondency, when she was ready to promise anything rather than see her dear Lady Letitia in grief. We do not ask our right-minded readers to forgive Camiola ; we readily admit that she ought to have been ever so much wiser, that she ought to have always known her own mind, that she ought, under no matter what distracting conditions and distressing mental conflicts, to have always done, said, and thought the right thing. But then this is a story about a girl who did not always say and do the right thing, whose heart and head did not always work quite well and harmoniously together, a girl who sometimes made mistakes and had to be sorry for them, a very human sort of girl, just a woman and a sister.

Among her many inconsistencies of mind and purpose was that of which she was distinctly conscious in going to this festival at Fitzurse House. She dreaded, positively

dreaded, meeting Romont there ; and yet at moments she felt that she would give her life just to see him for once ; and there. “ Must I lose him ? ” she kept incessantly asking of herself ; sometimes varying the mental inquiry by asking of herself, “ If I do see him what shall I do ? ” The place seemed fateful to her. It was there—out among those paths, under those trees which she could see through the open windows—it was there that the truth was suddenly borne in upon her that she loved him. It was the very appeal made to her love by Georgie Lisle that shot into her heart of heart the conviction that she loved Romont. Suppose he should not come, would that mean that he had steeled his mind to the knowledge that they had better not meet, and that all was over between them ? And she not merely loved him, but she knew he was just the man she could love and ought to love ; the man she could look up to ; whose purposes she could share. She had been hearing much about him lately in an indirect, scrappy sort of way, in little sentences casually—as she supposed casually

—let drop by Mrs. Pollen; in stray talks between Mr. Lisle and his wife. She knew of the brave, persistent efforts he had been making to do good for others; for others of whom he knew next to nothing but that they were poor and in distress. If she could have been a man, this is just the sort of man she could have wished to be; this is the man she could love; the man she would have if she could for her lover and her husband. And she might have had him for her lover and her husband if only she had not been so foolish, if only she had not been so weak, if only she had known her own mind at the right time. No—that was not it; it was worse than that; for she did know her own mind; she knew it from the first moment of discovering her love; she knew that she wanted to marry Romont; but she allowed herself to be led away from the knowledge which ought to have been her light and her guide.

She was a fearless unaffected girl; never shy; yet this night she went through the rooms with a sort of frightened look in her eyes, as

if she feared something about to happen. She sometimes shook her head slowly, languidly, from side to side, as one who says, "It is all over ; I can't help it now." Mrs. Pollen noted even the slightest and most passing of these little signals of distress ; and she was not ill-pleased. She wanted the girl to be in a strain of emotional temper that night ; to be susceptible, to be impressionable, to be startled out of conventional moods and left open to the promptings of her own soul.

"Camiola, my dear," Mrs. Pollen said in a low tone, "will you go into the music-room and tell me if everything is right there ? It isn't open to the people yet ; and I want the benefit of your last glance over its arrangements."

Then Mrs. Pollen saw Walter Fitzurse come in. He was dressed very well, and looked decidedly handsome and striking, with a sort of picturesquely penitential air about him which Mrs. Pollen hoped would tell upon Janette. He passed Camiola as she was leaving the room, and made her a low bow, a sort of deprecating, beseeching bow.

"Quite the play-actor mood," Mrs. Pollen said to herself with a misgiving, for she felt sure that utter sincerity would be his best chance with Janette.

He came towards Mrs. Pollen, and she received him with ostentatious friendliness of manner, for she knew that every one would observe them, and she felt that if he was to have a chance at all it must be a good and full chance. "Your wife is here ; go to her and speak to her ; she won't make a scene. Ask her to let you talk to her in some other room. Do it quietly, and don't be afraid." Mrs. Pollen said this in a very low tone as she gave him her hand.

What might have happened if he had gone straight to Janette that moment no one can ever know. Very likely the child's heart might have given way at the sight of him, her lover, her husband ; and she might have taken him back to her love and her heart, and all might have been well even then. But no such chance was given by Walter Fitzurse to himself. He looked towards Janette. She was with her father and mother ; her face in

its present repose looked sad, and thin, and wasted ; he was angry with her for looking unhappy ; he was angry with her because the very sight of her made him feel remorseful and ashamed ; he was afraid of her and of her father and mother ; he lost nerve, he lost courage, he was conscience-stricken ; and yet his conscience-stricken condition prevented him from doing the one thing which conscience would have bidden him to do. He quailed ; he sickened. He was taken with a demoralizing dread of a scene ; he hesitated, faltered ; and at that moment of ominous indecision his eyes rested on Vinnie Lammas. • Then his good genius deserted him once for all. His memory and mind went back to the days of his love-making with Vinnie Lammas ; he thought of her as the one woman who was not ashamed of him ; the girl who had been proud of his love and his attentions ; the girl whom he might have married without sham or pretence or pitiful scheme of any kind, and who would have looked up to him, adored him, worshipped him, when they were married. The

moment was fatal to him. Vinnie was seated ; there was a vacant place beside her. He sat down and entered into low and rapid talk with her. Janette saw this, and a tremor came over her face. Her mother saw it ; Mrs. Pollen saw it ; Christian Pilgrim saw it. What could have possessed him ? Such a thing done just then and there was an insult and an outrage. " It is all up," Mrs. Pollen said to herself ; " he has had his last chance and has thrown it away. Never again will I help him to regain his wife and his career. He is gone—let him go."

Presently the few who were watching this little scene saw Vinnie get up hastily and leave her place. So abrupt was her rising that the least observant who had noticed the matter at all must have seen that something had happened. What had happened ? This. Walter, in his almost hysterical mood, had told her that he loved her still and her only ; that his life was ruined ; that he had been left by his wife for ever ; that he had in all the world no one but Vinnie to care for him ; that he knew she still did care for him, and he

besought her to go away with him to America, where they could begin a new life and be happy together in a relationship which would be a real marriage—not a false and hollow social sham like that in which he was linked with Janette. Every one has heard or read of this sort of thing ; it might, as Mrs. Pollen once said, have been printed and sold as a circular, suitable to such men and purposes and occasions. Then Vinnie got up with flushed cheeks and choking throat, and left him without a word.

As she was going out she passed Pilgrim, who came after her and caught her by the arm.

“He has been making love to you ?” were Pilgrim’s first words. “Don’t dare to deny it.”

“Oh, what does it matter what he does ?” the girl answered distractedly. “He must be going mad, I think. O God forgive him !”

Pilgrim let her go and turned back into the room, and watched every movement of Walter’s with burning eyes. He saw Walter

get up and lounge vacuously about the room for a moment or two. Then Walter turned to that end of the room where Janette had been, and where she was now standing almost alone, her father and mother having been drawn into talk with others different ways. Was he going to speak to her? Apparently. Janette looked towards him, and saw his purpose, perhaps. She turned away, and going to her father put her hand on his arm as if to claim his protection, and said a word to him and they passed out of the room together. Then Walter lingered for a little and spoke to this person and to that; and then he too left the room, and Pilgrim followed him, keeping him in sight from room to room, from corridor to hall, and so into the grounds and out at the gate. Mrs. Pollen, while chatting incessantly with some of her guests, lost nothing of all this. She knew what was happening, what had happened, as well as if she had heard each story from the lips of those concerned. She began to look anxiously round as if seeking some one, and after a moment or two of much

mental uneasiness she saw Romont and signalled to him.

"Something has been going on," she said. "See after Pilgrim; he has followed that wretched creature Fitzurse; there will be a quarrel of some sort. Don't lose a moment. Go."

Romont was not a man to lose a moment. He asked no question but went. Just then Camiola came to Mrs. Pollen.

"I have seen to the music-room," she said; "everything looks as well as could be. I think everything is going right, in that way."

"In that way," Mrs. Pollen answered. "Yes, in that way. But in other ways, my dear Camiola, I think all is not going right."

"Has something happened?" Camiola asked, with sudden vague misgiving and alarm.

"Something has happened; something is going to happen, I am afraid. I have sent Romont to prevent harm if he can."

"Oh, why did you send *him*?"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

“I CAN DIE ALONE.”

WHEN Walter got out of the grounds he wandered, dragged himself along with slow, uncertain, unsteady steps in the direction of the old church. He had no purpose of any kind; he was not thinking of going to the church until he saw himself near it, until its spire came between him and the clear starry sky. Then he saw, too, that a faint light shone from one of the windows. There was something unnatural and mysterious, something that hinted of spectral presences and influences, in that faint light coming from the church windows at that unwonted hour. He took out his watch, and was able, by holding it close to his eyes, to make out that it wanted but a few minutes of eleven o'clock. He

would go into the church, he thought ; in his present mood the sight of anything beyond the common and the natural would be welcome to him. It seemed to him that it would be well if he could go into the gallery on the left as one enters the church, the gallery on the wall of which is the monument to the great man whom he was still pleased to regard as the historic chief of his house. He thought he should like to lie beneath that monument and die there.

He got over the wall and into the churchyard. The sound of the water flowing beneath the wall came with a melancholy cadence into the thoughts of the ruined young man. One of the doors of the church was open, and Walter went in. There was no ghost to be seen there ; nor ghost nor living creature ; yet a light was burning, and in the gallery which he meant to reach. That one light, a jet of gas half turned on, made the darkness of the other places seem unearthly and appalling. One would naturally long to get within the shelter and protection of that single ray of light. Walter crept with the softest tread

up to the gallery and stood alone beneath the historic monument. This egotistic dreamer of sick dreams fancied himself for the moment some ruined scion of an illustrious house who comes to die beneath the trophy of his greatest ancestor.

Thus far he was alone in the church. He did not now trouble himself to think about the reason for the light burning and the open door. The reason was very simple. There was some work of cleaning which had to be done that night, and which had to be put off until then ; it concerned the gallery with the monument, and the old woman who kept the keys and lived in a cottage near was up and doing and superintending the business. She and her girl-assistant had merely gone back to her cottage for a moment to gladden and strengthen themselves with a good cup of tea, and naturally left the light burning and the door open, not thinking of the slightest possibility of any sane Fitzursehamite or other personage caring to go in. Walter was alone. He leaned his back against the railing of the gallery and was gazing upwards at the marble

effigy and inscription on the wall. Once he glanced casually over his shoulder at the pavement of the church beneath ; a pavement much made up of the flat tombstones of the dead ; and he thought how horrible it would be if he were to fall over and come crash on that stone floor and be killed in that hideous way. He drew away from the railing and nearer to the wall with the historic marble to which his eyes were upturned.

Suddenly he heard the sound of a quick footfall on the gravel of the churchyard. Some watcher or workman coming back, he thought ; and he roused himself from his dreamings and returned into reality. It would be ridiculous to be found there ; and yet if any one came in he must disclose himself or run the chance of being left behind and locked up in the church for the night. The sound ceased ; but Walter felt sure there was some one in the church ; inside the door—below. Then the footfall was heard again. The man—it certainly was a man—was coming in, was coming towards that very gallery, was ascending the lower stairs. What

matter? Walter was doing no harm, and could easily explain that he had come in out of mere curiosity, seeing the light. At the foot of the higher stairs leading directly up to the gallery, the new-comer stopped, and Walter heard him lock and bolt the door behind him. He, then, and this new-comer were locked and bolted in together in this gallery; the locked door on one side, the depth from the gallery to the stone floor beneath on the other. What did it matter? The man would unlock the door and let him out. And yet it felt appalling somehow; and now the man came rushing up the stairs, and Walter drew away to the further end of the gallery, and set his back against the wall, like one who is prepared to defend himself. In another second Christian Pilgrim came tearing along the gallery towards him with eyes sending out a light like that of the corpse-candle that burns pale on the sea-washed rocks, and he clutched Walter in his strong, fierce arms, and gave a laugh of insane triumph.

"Come," he cried; "I have found you at last! I told you I would kill you, and I'll

kill you now ! No one can get to us now ; we are locked in. Come !”

He was dragging the wretched young man to the railing of the gallery, evidently determined to fling him over, down upon the pavement. In another moment Walter would have to die the very death the bare thought of which had just set all his nerves in quivering, shuddering motion. He struggled with all the passionate energy of youth and despair ; but he was struggling with a man of far greater physical strength, a man now, as he felt sure, possessed by the demon of insanity. Walter gave vent to his feelings in a shriek of agony ; a cry for help where he believed that help there could be none.

“ You fool !” Pilgrim said, with a terrible laugh ; “ if you want to fight for your life you oughtn’t to waste your breath ! I don’t care ; I want to die. Come with me.”

At that moment steps were heard as of one rushing into the church ; then a beating and clanging at the gallery door. Walter cried out again. Pilgrim laughed in a low chuckling tone. “ Too late now,” he said between

his teeth. The words went into Walter's very ear. "They can't get at us here." He redoubled his effort to drag Walter away, but the moment's interruption had caused him to relax his grip a little, and Walter was now clinging with both hands to the projecting marble which symbolized the shield of his supposed ancestor. The struggle began all over again with the most savage energy. Pilgrim now knew that he had no time to lose.

Some one ran into the church beneath and gazed up and tried to pierce the gloom and see what was going on. The struggling forms were almost directly between him and the light, and he took in the whole situation in a moment. One quick glance all around told him what he must try to do ; the only thing there was to do. Beneath the railings of the gallery and not far inside it, although far below it, stood the pulpit. The pulpit was almost directly in front of one of the pillars, narrow wooden pillars they were, which supported the gallery. Above the pillars came the gallery ; that is to say, the

pillars did not rise outside the rails, but ceased where the rails began. Still if a man could reach from the pulpit to the pillar, and could shin up the pillar, he might by a sudden and venturous effort succeed in flinging himself out so as to catch at one of the rails. With one such grasp the rest would be easy work. In much less than the time it has taken to put this into writing the man had sprung into the pulpit, leaped like a cat from the pulpit to the pillar, climbed up the pillar hand over hand, then with a desperate spring and a clutch upwards had succeeded in getting hold of one of the rails, and in another second was with the two fighting creatures in the gallery. Walter was breaking into a cry of relief when his eyes, dazed and startled as they were, could see that his supposed rescuer was Joseph, the Albanian, and then he remembered his dream, and believed that Joseph too had come as his enemy, and he thought that all was over, and closed his eyes and gave up the struggle.

Pilgrim had succeeded in dragging Walter away from his grasp of the monument, and

was backing towards the edge of the railings with his wretched prisoner in his gripe. Romont promptly thrust himself between the two struggling men and the rails, and he caught Walter round the waist. His own back was squeezed hard against the rails. Even in this moment the sort of good-humoured coolness which was his characteristic did not desert him. "If only this railing holds," he thought, "we shall do well enough." But he already felt the rails bending and creaking; they would never hold out long.

"Pilgrim, my good fellow," he asked in a low quiet tone, for he assumed he had to deal with a madman, "don't you see that you will have us all over and down on the pavement in another second? Good heavens, Fitzurse, have you no strength at all; can't you help yourself one little bit?"

Walter was hopeless. The voice of Romont speaking, as it seemed to him, out of the lips of Albanian Joseph was too much for him. His head swam round, his limbs relaxed; he fainted in Romont's arms and hung down limp as a dead body. Pilgrim

was still holding his grip, but he was no longer crushing against the rails. He had sense enough to understand Romont's words and to keep from injuring him. His strength was terrible, but Romont braced himself up for one last effort, and literally tore the swooning body free of Pilgrim's clutch. At the time Romont did not fully understand Pilgrim's purpose. He believed that Pilgrim only meant to kill Fitzurse. Afterwards it dawned on him, and by degrees became clear, that Pilgrim meant to die with his victim. Now, when he had torn Fitzurse free, he made no attempt to restrain Pilgrim. He had no time ; he did not think of it ; he could not have done it if he had to care for Fitzurse. He was stretching Fitzurse on the floor, and meant then to appeal to Pilgrim, and try to calm him and get to know what it was all about.

Pilgrim gave him no chance. With a wild cry, "Save him, then, if you want to save him—I can die alone!" he flung himself heavily against the frail railings. Some of them gave way; there was a plunge forward ;

Romont heard another cry, this time inarticulate, and then a crash on the pavement below, followed by such a succession of echoes that one might have thought for the moment all earth's caverns were in succession breaking into tumultuous applause over the deed which had just been done. The dust flew in clouds ; the rats were heard to scamper affrighted among stools and seats ; some dog in a barge on the river answered to the noise in the church with a prolonged howl which might have seemed the death-wail over the man who lay killed on the pavement.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"I SEE ALL."

THERE is a striking passage in "Philip van Artevelde" which tells of the mysterious manner in which, "when this or that has chanced, the smoke outruns the flash"—the news gets to our ears almost in anticipation of the event. The old church by the river had hardly ceased to echo to the crash of Pilgrim's fall when, somehow or other, a shuddering sensation seemed to go through Mrs. Pollen's whole frame, and the words almost rose to her lips that something terrible had happened. Soon the story began to take shape. Somebody had just arrived, it seemed, who, passing by the churchyard, had seen light within, and while still on his way to Fitzurse House heard a noise which, to

his startled imagination, seemed like the thunder itself. This story was first told in definite manner to Mr. Lisle, who was always quiet and prudent whenever anything had to be done. He went to Mrs. Pollen and said a word or two to the effect that he feared something had fallen in the church, and he had better go and see about it. At the time he had no thought of anything but some mere accident to masonry ; some falling of part of a roof or other such comparatively trivial thing ; but Mrs. Pollen well knew that if anything had happened it was more than that.

"Take some people with you ; take some men," she said quietly. She would have kept her nerves if she were told that the end of the world was to come next moment. "I fancy something bad has happened ; be prepared for anything." In her heart she was only thinking "if anything should have happened to Bertie Romont, and it was I who sent him, and *she* asked me why did I send him ! I must get her out of the way for the present, anyhow until we know some-

thing." She looked about, and at last saw Camiola the centre of a circle of children, to whom she was telling stories.

"Camiola dear," she said, "I want the music-room cleared. I have a particular reason. There is a little effect which I have had in preparation for some time, and I must get the music-room all to ourselves for a few moments to manage it. Now, will you just go and see that it is cleared out? You can tell them why, as far as you know; but get it done, dear, will you? Just go about among them and tell them, and I will come to you as soon as it is quite empty and tell you what I want you to do next."

What Mrs. Pollen thought was this: "No news will have reached the people in the music-room yet. It is barred against all outsiders, and no rumours will have found their way in there yet from this side. If Romont is safe, he will come back here at once, and he will enter the music-room by the use of the key so as not to be seen coming in, and to be able to tell us quietly all. Then he will see her. The first thing she will

know of the whole affair is that he is safe."

Camiola thought there was something rather odd and mysterious about this request of Mrs. Pollen's. She could not take it quite literally; she could not altogether believe that it meant just what it said and no more. She could not help thinking that it must have something to do with the disappearance of Walter Fitzurse and Pilgrim and the mission of Romont to look after them, and her nerves began to quiver. But she had long learned to have so much faith in Mrs. Pollen as to believe it was best to do, without question, what her eccentric friend desired to have done. So she submitted.

"Oh yes," she said, with a tremulous lip, "I will go, since you wish it."

"Yes, dear, I wish it." So Mrs. Pollen said, willing to risk all rather than have some wild, extravagant story shot suddenly into the girl's ears; and Camiola went upon her curious errand with a sinking heart boding of ill.

She succeeded in getting the people quietly

out of the music-room ; the general opinion being that something was to happen afterwards in connection with semi-darkness and a magic lantern, and that it would be well not to wander away too far from the door, the inner door, of the music-room, lest the news of this great treat should get abroad over the whole company, and the whole company accordingly swarm to the centre of attraction.

Camiola at last found herself alone in the music-room, and she assumed that she was to stay there until Mrs. Pollen came. It was very lonely. The softened lights had in them something subdued and melancholy ; the place seemed like a great chamber of the dead with funeral lamps burning. No doubt it was the contrast between the crowded and noisy condition of the room a few moments ago and its loneliness now that put such a feeling into Camiola's mind ; that contrast and the disturbed state of her own nerves and her own heart. She felt utterly depressed and out of courage. The future looked all blank and darksome to her. She was becoming miserably conscious that she had

committed herself to a cruel mistake when she once again succumbed to the supposed desire of Lady Letitia and consented to marry Georgie. She was growing to be entirely ashamed of the part she had played, and she began to torment herself with the thought that Romont, too, must despise her now for what she had done, and that he cared nothing more for her. Everything had gone wrong with her, she thought, since that first night in Fitzurse House when she found out that she was in love with him. Only now, when Mrs. Pollen spoke to her, did she learn that Romont had been in Fitzurse House this evening, this very night; and he had not sought her out, had not come near her; evidently did not intend to come near her. And now he was in danger of some kind, some vague undefined danger; and suppose she should never see him again, should never be able to explain or excuse herself to him, should never have a chance of making him believe that, however inconsistently or wrongly she had acted, she had loved him all the time and had known that she loved him?

These thoughts filled her mind and blended very sadly indeed with the sounds of the festivity that was going on so near. The music and the noise of talk irritated and jarred upon her nerves. The solitude of the room became unbearable. "I will not stay here any longer," she said to herself; "I can't bear it."

Suddenly she heard a rustling on the gravel just outside the door, and then a key turning rapidly in the lock. Not a great many persons had private keys to open that door, and of these few who had there was one at least whom Camiola would not care to see just then and there. She stood up by the organ waiting, anxious, almost frightened; in the mood of one who knows that something out of the common is about to befall; she stood with one hand resting on the keys of the organ and her eyes intent upon the door. The door opened, and there was an oblong of darkness made for a moment, and then Romont, in the dress of Albanian Joseph, came into the room. He stopped short, seeing her, and she saw that his clothes were

torn, and that his face was cut and his hands were wounded.

"There has been bad work," he said quietly, not willing to alarm her, yet anxious to prepare her for grim news. "Poor Pilgrim is dead."

The long crushed-down feeling of the girl rose in a great wave and overwhelmed her, and she ran to him and cried—

"Oh, but *you* are safe ; thank God, *you* are safe !"

She threw her arms round his neck. The knowledge which she vaguely had that there was danger, and that he was in it ; that he would be sure to go far into it ; the solitary nerve-thrilling time in the music-room, his sudden entrance, the blood upon his face and hands, and yet the assurance that he was safe—all these influences were too much for her and beat down her self-control, and she had thrown her arms around his neck before she knew what she was doing, and now that she did know and was endeavouring to draw back she found that he would not let her.

"My sweetest Camiola," he said ; and he

kissed her again and again, unchecked it must be owned ; “ and so you were in alarm for me ? How sweet of you ; and how happy for me to come on you in this way. Now, of course you won't hesitate any more—— ”

“ Oh no, no ; how could I after this ! ”

He drew a deep breath. “ I am so happy ; I can't help it. I am so happy, although poor Pilgrim is dead. See, I have stained your beautiful dress.”

“ It is your blood,” she said, with a slight shiver. “ You were in such danger, then, and you are hurt ? ”

“ It's nothing ; only a few scratches got in trying to save a worthless scoundrel. I am sorry to have stained your dress—but let it be a symbol to show that I would shed my heart's blood for you, Camiola. And you really do love me ? ”

“ Oh yes ; I loved you from the very first.”

Then there was a silent moment of measureless content to both.

“ Tell me all that has happened,” she said suddenly. “ It is a shame for us to think of ourselves at such a time ; it is not like you or me.”

"Very like me," said Romont. "I couldn't help thinking about you and me—about *us*—if my dearest friend lay dead. Indeed, poor Pilgrim was a very dear friend."

At this moment Mrs. Pollen entered the room.

"You needn't tell me anything just at present," she said; "I have heard all—yes, and I see all."

CHAPTER L.

"MY TWO."

THERE was an inquest ; there was a police investigation ; the papers were filled for a time with accounts of the Fitzurseham mystery, and the attention of the public was turned to the place in a manner which made the best of its residents very uncomfortable. The ordinary Fitzursehamite, however, was proud of living in a place which had a mystery and a violent death ; and was sure to make a boast of the fact that he knew Christian Pilgrim, and that he used to see Walter Fitzurse every day when Fitzurse was quite a boy. For a while the story of Jethro Merridew's sudden death got inextricably mixed up in the public mind with the tragedy in the old church, and indeed

some people will never succeed in getting them properly separated. A philosophic person might have found some pleasure and profit from observing an illustration of the growth of the myth evolving itself out of the daily developments of legend concerning the life and death of Jethro Merridew and Christian Pilgrim. One rather popular theory was that Christian was Merridew's son, and consequently the brother of the circus woman; that Walter Fitzurse had made love to her and then abandoned her; that Merridew died of grief at seeing what a wreck she had become; and that Pilgrim tried to kill Walter out of revenge, and, failing in his purpose, endeavoured to escape, and was accidentally killed in the effort.

As far as the more intelligent part of the public were concerned, Romont's evidence made the whole story clear enough. Pilgrim's reason had suddenly deserted him; and Walter Fitzurse's assailant was for the time a mere maniac. From what may be called the Bow Street point of view, Fitzurse was in no wise to be blamed. He was defending

himself the best he could, and, but for Romont's intervention, he would have been killed.

The event made a terrible impression upon Fitzurse. For a while his whole nervous system was so shattered that it did not seem certain whether his life, or at all events his reason, would not go. He was taken to Fitzurse House and cared for there by Mrs. Pollen. When he was getting a little better Janette came to see him. They had a long interview; no one present, of course, but these two, the husband and the wife. The result told very briefly by Janette was, that they agreed to separate, he to go to the United States and try to make a way for himself there. To do him justice, it was he who insisted upon this. Then, after a time, if their affection for each other seemed to return, they could come together again.

"Something tells me," said Janette, with solemn eyes looking into the eyes of Mrs. Pollen, "that we shall not meet again."

Mrs. Pollen thought, in her secret heart, that it would be just as well if this prophetic

warning were to become verified, but she did not say anything of that kind to Janette. "She loves him still—after all," Mrs. Pollen thought. "If there is anything in him he may have a chance even yet."

Meanwhile, the hope was something for Janette to live on, despite her boding ; and she was, perhaps, not altogether unhappy. Her sister Alice clung to her now with a plaintive and eager affection, praying for her love—for all her love. "You must give me all your love, Janette ; you must, indeed, now that he is gone."

They buried Christian Pilgrim in the old churchyard. His body lies just near one of the paths that lead to the wall overlooking the river. Vinnie Lammas must have trodden on that very earth the night she ran across the churchyard to fling herself into the water. Jethro Merridew sleeps in the churchyard too. His daughter was at his funeral, and comported herself quite decently, people said, considering that she was a circus woman.

To days of excitement succeeded days of

reaction and depression for some, at least, of our friends at the rectory. The rectory was for the most part silent as the grave. The journey to Egypt was still talked of; but of course every one knew by this time that Camiola would not go, and Lady Letitia and Janette somehow did not seem as if they had animal spirits enough between them for such an undertaking. The Rector strongly urged it, believing that they both needed to be shaken up, and that the very inconveniences and discomforts of such a journey would do them good. He did not much mind about himself; it was part of his business and his duty to put up with things and not to want to get away from his post.

Mrs. Pollen and Camiola were talking over all this one evening. Camiola stayed now at the rectory and now at Fitzurse House. She had taken almost altogether to Fitzurse House since it had come to be known at the rectory that she would not go to Egypt and what else that determination on her part implied. Camiola had been pouring out her soul to her friend concerning her love and

her happiness ; and after a while she went on to say that there were some shadows over her happiness too, and that these came out of the general sadness which had settled upon the rectory.

"You see, I am afraid that I am part of it —part of the cause of it."

"Not so far as Janette is concerned."

"Oh no ; I didn't mean that. I was thinking of Lady Letitia, and I am still sorry for poor Georgie. I suppose he is unhappy ; but I couldn't help that ; I couldn't marry him. Why should I ? Bertie is all the world to me."

"I always told you so ; and you wouldn't believe me. I tell you something else now, Camiola. I am not afraid of hurting your vanity, my dear, for you have hardly any to hurt. I don't believe Georgie will remain long unconsolated."

"Don't you, really ? If I only thought that, I should be so glad. Don't you, really ? You are almost always right, however you get at things."

"Well, he was always too hysterical for

me ; I have not much faith in that sort of thing. He was like a child, the more you try to keep him from a thing the more he wants to have it. No—Camiola, he won't die of love for you or any other creature that ever put on a petticoat."

"I wish I might hear of his getting married," Camiola said thoughtfully. "There must be girls who could make him happy and whom he could love. There is a great deal that is lovable in him."

"Is there? I suppose so ; I never could quite see it, but I dare say it is so. Well, I haven't the slightest doubt that he will get married very soon—perhaps before you do."

"I hope so," said Camiola, and there the talk ended.

Mrs. Pollen's words might have been taken as prophetic. The very next day Camiola received a line from Lady Letitia enclosing a telegraphic message from Cairo.

"From Georgie ; to Lady Letitia Lisle.

"Dearest mother, I have found happiness at last. Am married to a charming noble-

hearted woman, Agnes Clements, widow of Major Clements, who was killed in South Africa. We are devoted to one another. Tell father ; we hope you will both be glad."

Mrs. Pollen and Camiola looked at each other for a moment in a sort of bewilderment, and then both at once broke out into a peal of laughter. Their mirth was ringing still when Romont entered the room.

"I wonder who she is?" Camiola said.

"Oh, I know," Mrs. Pollen answered. "I know her very well. She was very pretty ; she is a dreadful little flirt."

"*Was* very pretty?"

"Yes ; in a sense she is very pretty still."

"Still? Good gracious, how old is she?"

"Not old at all," Mrs. Pollen said demurely ; "I should call her young, in fact. About my age, dear ; running rapidly into the forties, I should think ; at all events, quite forty. A very nice age, don't you think? If he happens to be rather too young, that's not her fault, you know ; she would be younger still if she could, I dare

say. I knew her in Cairo. She makes up wonderfully well; you have no idea how nice she looks in evening dress and by lamplight. I should think she would settle down and drop flirtation now that she has got a nice young fellow to marry her. And just to think, Camiola, that you were really going to throw away your youth and your life, and your love—to say nothing of Bertie Romont here—on a creature who could be consoled so soon by a woman like that!”

“I don’t suppose I ever really could have done it,” Camiola said apologetically.

“You never could have done it,” Romont said, “because I never would have allowed you to do it; not if I had to carry you off and do the *Lochinvar*. I never felt very much alarm about it.”

“Can she make him happy, I wonder?” Camiola asked.

“I shouldn’t wonder,” Romont answered. “These regular hack flirts sometimes make very good wives for the sort of men who like them. I shouldn’t like them myself, but every man to his taste. Our friend Georgie apparently does.”

"It's a good lesson for one's vanity," Camiola observed gravely. "I might have thought he was dying for me."

"Fact is," Mrs. Pollen said, "they don't die."

"Don't they?" Romont asked. "What about poor Pilgrim? I am convinced that love was in one way or another the cause of his death. He went mad, I grant you, but it was love that did it."

"Then I will put it differently," Mrs. Pollen said; "the men one wouldn't mind dying for never die for us."

"I would die for you," Romont said, "if you wanted me to; and if Camiola would give me leave."

"But she wouldn't, and you know it; and that sort of dying is easily done. I feel very sad about poor Pilgrim all the same."

The journey to Egypt was of course given up now. Lady Letitia felt no very passionate longing to see her son's new wife. The campaign was all over, and Georgie would probably soon come home. Lady Letitia felt wretched over the whole affair, and per-

haps could not quite keep from secretly blaming Camiola because she had not married Georgie at once and out of hand, and so prevented all possibility of his ever marrying the fading widow.

“Our only hope must be that she will not fade too soon,” said the Rector, with a determined effort to make the best of things, “and that his glamour may continue, so that she may not fade for him. You see, Letitia, he would never have done for a girl like Camiola. Although he is our son, we can’t help admitting that, can we?”

“No; I suppose not. Bertie Romont is certainly much better suited for her——”

“Oh yes, ever so much better——”

“And as it couldn’t be our son, St. George, I am very glad it is Kitty Romont’s son that is to get her. I positively will go and see Kitty Romont again. Fancy all that has happened since I saw her last!”

It was arranged that the marriage of Romont and Camiola was to take place very soon, and was to be altogether a quiet affair. The married lovers were to go to Italy; the

Lisles were to go to a German bath, taking Janette with them; the whole encampment was about to break up; some going off to be happy, others to make the best of things.

The soft, sweet autumn was fading already into a mild winter, and Mrs. Pollen, Camiola, and Romont were standing one afternoon on the lawn of Fitzurse House. The marriage day was coming near; the lovers would soon go away. They were talking over many things, past, present, and to come, with their friend whom shortly they were to leave. Amid all their happiness there was a certain sense of sadness at the thought that they were to part. So many things had happened lately that it did not seem altogether possible for their lives to settle down again into the familiar grooves. There were occasional moments of silence.

"I suppose you haven't thought yet," Mrs. Pollen said, "of what you are to do with yourself in the way of a career? What is he to do with himself, Camiola? Is he still to be a professional philanthropist? Is he ever to be Joseph the Albanian again?"

"Oh no," Camiola said hastily, and then suddenly corrected herself. "Yes; I think he shall be Albanian Joseph sometimes, for my exclusive benefit; I think he must wear the mummer's disguise on every anniversary of the day when he rowed us on the river. Don't you remember that day?"

"Yes; I remember," said Mrs. Pollen.

"I think you too must see him on these great anniversaries, Mrs. Pollen. We must have you."

"If I am anywhere near."

"If you are anywhere near?" Camiola asked, surprised. "You don't propose to be very far away?"

"The question is," said Mrs. Pollen, "what I am to do with myself now? I have lost my right-hand man in Christian Pilgrim. I don't like the look of this place while his memory is still fresh upon it. I seem to see the stains of his blood everywhere round. I shall go away for awhile, and travel with Vinnie Lammas, although I am rather sick of travel, and I shall be lonely."

"Come with us," Camiola and Romont

exclaimed in one breath, and they really meant it. Mrs. Pollen smiled tenderly on them both and said—

"Come, now, that would be shabby and selfish of me, would not it—to inflict myself on your honeymoon? No, my dear pair of happy lovers, I shan't do that. Perhaps I shall ask you to keep this place for me after you get back to England and while I am still thinking things out and not certain what I shall do. You see, I am not quite clear whether, on the whole, I have made a particularly good thing out of my attempt to put matters all to rights in Fitzurseham. I wonder whether Pilgrim might not be alive and Janette Lisle unmarried and Walter Fitzurse still spooning on little Vinnie Lammas, if I had never come near the place? I begin to think I had better leave Providence to manage things for the future and not take on me to intervene."

"If you hadn't come," Camiola said, "what would have happened to us, I wonder—to Bertie and me?"

"Oh, well, I fancy Bertie and you would

have come all right anyhow; I am sentimental enough still to believe that when people love like that they are not to be kept asunder. But I don't feel satisfied with the general outcome of my attempt at administration; and indeed, it seems in the world as if the more some of us tried to do good the less we succeed; and we had better just be commonplace and discreet and let things alone. I am an unlucky woman, I think. Well, I'll go away for the present. Perhaps I may come back; although the most graceful and poetic thing would be now to disappear and never be seen here any more; and be always an odd sort of memory or myth in Fitzurseham. Who knows but that I might in time get into a legend and be regarded as a saint or a ghost, or something of the kind? Wouldn't that be better?"

"You are a saint to me—a patron saint!" Romont said.

"Am I really? Well, is not that another reason why I should go away, and stay away, and live on always like that in your memory and in the memory of my handsome Camiola,

who is looking so particularly grave just now——

"I can't bear the thought of your talking of going away," Camiola said, with tears rising in her eyes.

"My dear, you make me very happy—you two," Mrs. Pollen said. "And you make life seem sweet to me; you make me young again. I shall drag but a lengthening chain, you may be sure, at each remove that takes me farther from you. You have done a great deal for me, and whether I am here or whether I am there, near or far, I shall have you with me always in my memory and in my heart, you two; *my* two."

The bold dark eyes were moist as she spoke and she took a hand of each in hers.

THE END.





